Weird Tales

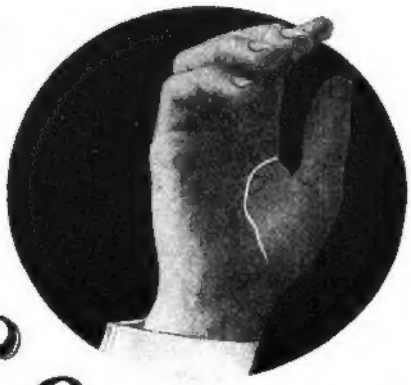
THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

WHEN THE GREEN STAR WANED

by Nictzin Dyalhis

APRIL 1925

25¢



Your lifeline tells how long you'll live. That's how long Kum-a-part Kuff Buttons are guaranteed to last—for Life!

Lifetime Wear! Guaranteed!

—but only if you see the name KUM-A-PART on it. Many separable cuff buttons look like KUM-A-PARTS but in no other can you be sure of lifetime wear.

And their simplicity! Click open snap shut—that's all—efficiency without fuss. The modern man unsnaps his cuff—he doesn't force his hand thru.

And how rarely is utility combined with such good looks. KUM-A-PARTS are beauty-spots in your cuffs. Their smart designs are the quiet signs which distinguish the exceptional from the merely good.

And KUM-A-PARTS cost no more than ordinary cuff buttons—$1.50 to $25 for the finer grades at Jewelers—50c and $1.00 for popular priced ones at Men's Shops.

Write for Correct Dress Chart "H" THE BAER & WILDE COMPANY, ATTLEBORO, MASS.

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

NUMBER 4

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 317 Baldwin Building, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States; $3.00 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1925, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for April, 1925

Cover Design ..... **Andrew Brosnatch**

When the Green Star Waned ..... **Nictzin Dyalhis** 3
Evil Beings From the Dark Side of the Moun Attack Aerth

Bloody Moon ..... **Harry Harrison Kroll** 13
A Thrilling Tale of the Kentucky Caves

The Lure of Atlantis ..... **Joel Martin Nichols, Jr.** 17
Beneath the Sargasso Sea, in the Grave of Missing Ships

Deaf, Dumb and Blind ..... **C. M. Eddy, Jr.** 25
A Grisly Story of the Obscene Legions of Evil

The Soul-Catching Cord ..... **J. W. Bennett and K. L. Soong** 31
A Chinese Occultist—and an Evil Apparition

The Grim Passenger ..... **Donald Edward Keyhoe** 37
Was the Steamship Titanic Destroyed by an Egyptian Curse?

Little Island ..... **H. Thompson Rich** 42
A Pacific Hurricane Hurled It Into the Ocean One Night

Servants of Satan ..... **Seabury Quinn** 49
No. 2. Giles and Martha Corey.
True Tale of Salem Witchcraft

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

The Dark Interval ..... **J. B. Powell** **55**
His Spirit Was Tied to Earth Until He Made Amends

Sleigh Bells ..... **Hasan Vokine** **59**
Snow-bound, Besieged by Wolves in a Russian Winter

Invaders From the Dark (First Installment) .. **Greye La Spina** **61**
A Novel of Werewolves and Occult Evil

The Wind That Tramps the World ..... **Frank Owen** **99**
A Tale of Sweetness and Light and Exquisite Music

Treasure ..... **Alexander Snyder** **107**
A Thug—a Physician—and a Mistake

Back From Dust ..... **Frank K. Shaw** **109**
The Shadow of the Guillotine Hung Over an American Courtroom

Strange Tales From Santo Domingo ..... **Arthur J. Burks** **113**
No. 3. Daylight Shadows.
Desert Heat and Madness

The Dark Pool ..... **Francis Hard** **118**
Verse

The Haunting Eyes ..... **Eudora Ramsay Richardson** **119**
They Came Back From the Grave to Torture and Save Him

The Headless Horror ..... **Robert Eugene Ulmer** **127**
A Tale of Thrills—and the Severed Head of a Murderer

Through the Horn Gate ..... **Walter G. Detrick** **131**
McIvor Meets Peggy Odel in the Golden Horn

The Electronic Plague ..... **Edward Hades** **136**
A Scientist's Mad Brain Looses a Radio Horror Upon the World

The Last of the Teeheemen (Conclusion) ... **Arthur Thatcher** **141**
Two-part Serial—Weird Adventures Among Dog-faced Savages

The White Scar ..... **Nellie Cravey Gillmore** **158**
A Dream Showed Him His Wife's Murderer

Grisley's Reception ..... **William Sanford** **162**
Fate Took a Hand in the Convict's Attempt to Escape

The Eyrie **164**
A Chat With the Readers

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply to

W. B. ZIFF CO.

Transportation Building Chicago | **Architects Building** New York | **Bryant Building** Kansas City

WHEN THE GREEN STAR WANED

by Nictzin Dyalhis

RON TI is our greatest scientist. Which is to say that he is the greatest in our known universe, for we of the planet Venhez lead all the others in every attainment and accomplishment, our civilization being the oldest and most advanced.

He had called a meeting of seven of us in his "workshop", as he termed his experimental laboratory. There came Hul Jok, the gigantic Commander of the Forces of Planetary Defense; Mor Ag, who knew all there was to know about the types, languages and customs of the dwellers on every one of the major planets; Vir Dax, who could well-nigh bring the dead to life with his strange remedies, powders, and decoctions; Toj Qul, the soft-spoken, keen of brain—the one Venhezian who could "talk a bird off a bough," as the saying goes—our Chief Diplomat of Interplanetary Affairs; and Lan Apo, whose gift was peculiar, in that he could unerringly tell, when listening to any one, be that one Venhezian, Markhurian, or from far Ooranos—planet of the unexpected—Lan Apo could, I repeat, tell whether that one spoke pure truth or plain falsehood. Nay, he could even read the truth held back, while seemingly listening attentively to the lie put forward! A valuable man—but uncomfortable to have about, at times!

Lastly, there was myself, whose sole distinction, and a very poor one, is that I am a maker of records, a writer of the deeds of others. Yet even such as I have names, and I am called Hak Iri.

Ron was excited. That was plain to be seen in the indifferent, casual manner he displayed. He is like that. The rest of us were frankly curious, all but that confounded Lan Apo. He wore a faintly superior smile, as who should say: "No mystery here, to me!"

I love that boy like a brother, but there are times when I ardently desire to bite him!

Ron stood before a huge dial. Now this is not a record of his invention, but a statement of the strange adventure in which we seven figured because of the events called to our attention by means of that wonderful device, so I shall not attempt its full description, merely saying that it was dial-formed, with the symbols of the major planets graven on its rim at regular intervals, and from its center there swung a long pointer, just then resting at a blank space.

"Listen," commanded Ron, and swung the pointer to the symbol of our own world.

Instantly there broke forth in that quiet room all the sounds of diversified life with which we Venhezians are familiar. All six of us who listened nodded comprehension. Already our science knew the principle, for we had long had dials that surpassed this one, apparently; for ours, while but attuned to our planet alone, could, and did, record every event, sight, or sound thereon, at any distance, regardless of solid obstacles intervening. But this dial—it bore the symbols of all the inhabited worlds. Could it—?

Ron swung the indicator to the symbol of Markhuri, and the high-pitched uproar that immediately assailed our ears was characteristic of that world of excitable, volatile-natured, yet kindly people.

Planet after planet, near and far, we contacted thus, regardless of space, until Ron swung the pointer to the symbol of Aerth.

And silence was the result!

RON's look was significant. It spoke volumes. One and all, we looked into each other's faces, and read therein reflected the same anxiety, the same apprehension which we each experienced.

That something was radically wrong with our neighbor, everybody already knew, for many years before the green light of Aerth had become perceptibly dimmer. Little attention, however, had been paid at first, for, by interplanetary law, each planet's dwellers remained at home, unless their presence was requested elsewhere. A wise idea, if one stops to consider. And no call had come to us nor to any other world from Aerth; so we had put it down to some purely natural cause with which, doubtless, the Aerthons were perfectly capable of coping without outside help or interference.

But year by year the green light waned in the night skies until finally it vanished utterly.

That might have been due to atmospheric changes, perhaps. Life, even, might have become extinct upon Aerth, so that no one lived to hold communication with anyone on any of the other inhabited worlds of the Planetary Chain, but it was hardly likely, unless the catastrophe were instantaneous; and in that case it would needs be violent. Anything so stupendous as that would have been registered at once by instruments all over the universe.

But now—this invention of Ron Ti's placed a remarkably serious aspect upon the question. For, if Aerth still occupied its old place—and we knew beyond doubt that it did—then what lay behind this double veil of silence and invisibility?

What terrible menace threatened the universe? For whatever had happened on one planet might well occur on another. And if Aerth should perchance be wrecked, the delicate balance of the universe would be seriously shaken, might even be thrown out completely, and Markhuri, so near the sun, go tumbling into blazing ruin.

Then, horror upon horror, until chaos and old night once more held sway, and the unguessed purposes of the Great Mind would be—

Oh, but such thoughts led to madness! What to do? That course alone held fast to sanity.

"Well?" demanded Hul Jok, the practical. "What are *you* going to do about it, Ron?"

That was Hul Jok all over! He was Ron's best friend and ardent admirer. He knew Ron's scientific ability, and firmly believed, should Venhez crack open, that inside of an hour Ron Ti would have the crevice closed tight and re-welded until in-

spection would fail to find any traces of the fracture! But at that, all Venhez thought the same way about Ron Ti's abilities, so Hul Jok was, after all, no better than the rest.

"It is matter for the Supreme Council," replied Ron gravely. "I propose that we seven obtain permission to visit Aerth in one of the great Aethir-Torps, bearing credentials from the council explaining why we have trespassed, and, if it be possible, try to ascertain if this be a thing warranting interference or no."

Why record the obvious? When such as Ron Ti and Hul Jok make request to the Supreme Council, it is from necessity, not for amusement. And the council saw it in that aspect, and granted them free hand.

We started as promptly as might be.

The great Aethir-Torp hurtled through space in smooth, even flight, Hul Jok in command. And who better fitted? Was he not our war prince, familiar with every device known for purposes of offense and defense? Surely he whose skilled brain could direct whole fleets and armies was the logical one to handle our single craft, guide her, steer her, and, if need arose, fight her!

With this in mind I asked him casually yet curiously:

"Hul Jok, if the Aerthons resent our inquiry, and bid us begone, what will you do?"

"Run!" grinned the giant, good-humoredly.

"You will not fight, should we be attacked?"

"Hum!" he grunted. "That will be different! No race on any planet may boast that they have attacked an Aethir-Torp of Venhez with impunity. At least," he added, decisively, "not while Hul Jok bears the emblem of the Looped Cross on his breast!"

"And if it be pestilence?" I persisted.

"Vir Dax would know more about that than I," he returned, shortly.

"And if—" I recommenced; but the giant released one hand from the controls, and clamped his great thick fingers on my shoulder, nearly crushing it.

"If," he growled, "you do not cease chattering when I am on duty, I shall most assuredly pitch you out through the opening of this conning tower into space, and there you may start on an orbit of your own as a cunning little planet! Are you answered?"

I was. But I grinned at him, for I knew our giant; and he returned the grin. But he was quite right. After all, speculations are the attempts of fools to forestall the future. Better to wait, and see reality.

And as for surmises, no one could possibly have dreamed any such nightmare state of affairs as we found upon our arrival.

A faint, dull, but lurid reddish glow first apprized us that we were drawing near our destination. It was Aerth's atmosphere, truly enough, but thick, murky, almost *viscous*, like a damp, soggy smoke.

So dense it was, in fact, that it became necessary to slow down the speed of our Aethir-Torp, lest the intense friction set up by our passage should melt the well-nigh infusible plates of Berulion metal of which our Aethir-Torp was built. And the closer we drew to Aerth's surface, the slower were we obliged to proceed from the same cause.

But finally we were gliding along slowly, close to the actual surface; and, oh, the picture of desolation which met our eyes! It happened that we had our first view where once had stood a great city. Had stood, I say, for now it was but tumbled heaps of ruins, save that here and there still loomed the shape of a huge building;

but these, even, were in the last stages of dilapidation, ready to fall apart at any moment.

In fact, one such did collapse with a dull, crashing roar, merely from the vibrations set up by the passing of our Aethir-Torp—and we were a good half-mile distant when it fell!

In vain we sounded our discordant *houtar;* no sign of life could we discern, and we all were straining our eyes in hopes. It was but a dead city. Was all Aerth thus?

Leaving behind this relic of a great past, we came to open country. And here the same deadly desolation prevailed. Nowhere was sign of habitation, nowhere was trace of animate life, neither bird, nor animal, nor man. Nor anywhere could we discern evidence of cultivation, and even of vegetation of wild sorts was but little to be seen. Nothing but dull, gray-brown ground, and sad-colored rocks, with here and there a dingy, grayish-green shrub, stunted, distorted, isolate.

We came eventually to a low range of mountains, rocky, gloomy, and depressing to behold. It was while flying low over these that we for the first time saw water since we arrived on Aerth. In a rather wide valley we observed a narrow ribbon of sluggish, leaden-hued fluid meandering slowly along.

Ron Ti, who was then at the controls, brought our craft to a successful landing. This valley, especially near the stream banks, was the most fertile place we had thus far seen. There grew some fairly tall trees, and in places, clumps and thickets of pallidly green bushes as high as Hul Jok's head, or even higher. But tree-trunks and bushes alike were covered with dull red and livid purple and garish yellow fungi, which Vir Dax, after one look, pronounced poisonous to touch as well as to taste.

And here we found life, such as it was. *I* found it, and a wondrous start the ugly thing gave me! It was in semblance but a huge pulpy *blob* of a loathly blue color, in diameter over twice Hul Jok's height, with a gaping, triangular-shaped orifice for mouth, in which were set scarlet fangs; and that maw was in the center of the bloated body. At each corner of this mouth there glared malignant an oval, opaque, silvery eye.

Well it was for me that, in obedience to Hul Jok's imperative command, I was holding my Blastor pointing ahead of me; for as I blundered full upon the monstrosity it upheaved its ugly bulk—how, I do not know, for I saw no legs nor did it have wings—to one edge and would have flopped down upon me, but instinctively I slid forward the catch on the tiny Blastor, and the foul thing vanished—save for a few fragments of its edges—smitten into nothingness by the vibrations hurled forth from that powerful little disintegrator.

It was the first time I had ever used one of the terrific instruments, and I was appalled at the instantaneous thoroughness of its workings.

The Blastor made no noise—it never does, nor do the big Ak-Blastors which are the fighting weapons used on the Aethir-Torps, when they are discharging annihilation—but that nauseous ugliness I had removed gave vent to a sort of bubbling hiss as it returned to its original atoms; and the others of our party hastened to where I stood shaking from excitement—Hul Jok was wrong when he said it was fear!—and they questioned me as to what I had encountered.

Shortly afterward, Hul Jok found another one and called us all to see it, threw a rock the size of his head at it, hit it fairly in the center of its mouth; and the rock vanished inside

and was apparently *appreciated*, for the nightmare quivered slightly, rippled a bit, and lay still. Hul Jok tried it with another rock, but had the mischance to hit his little pet in the eye—and *seven* Blastors sent that livid horror to whatever limbo had first spawned it! And it was above our heads in air, hurtling downward upon us when we blew it apart! Lightning scarcely moves swifter! Even Hul Jok was satisfied thereafter, when encountering one, to confine his caresses to pointing his Blastor and pressing the release stud, instead of trying to play games with it.

But that was, after all, the sole type of life we found in that valley, although what the things fed upon we could not then ascertain, unless they devoured their own species.

We found others like them in another place—blob-things that could not be destroyed by our Blastors; and we saw, too, what they were fed with. But that in its proper place!

We spent some time here in this valley, but then, finding nothing new, we again took to our craft and passed over the encircling mountains, only to find other mountains beyond. Also, other valleys.

At length we came to a larger valley than any we had before seen. This was, rather, a plain between two ranges, or, to speak more accurately, a flat where the range divided and formed a huge oval, to re-unite and continue as an unbroken chain farther on.

And here we again landed where a grove of trees gave concealment for our Aethir-Torp in case of—we did not know—anything! But upon us all there lay a heavy certitude that we were in a country inimical to our very continuance of existence.

Why? We could not tell that, yet each of us felt it, *knew* it, and, to some extent, feared it—for the bravest may well fear the unknown.

It was Mor Ag who had spoken the words which guided our actions for some time past.

"Were Aerth inhabited as we understand the word," he had said, sententiously, "the great city we saw would be no ruin, but teeming with life and activity, as was the custom of the Aerthons before the light of the Green Star waned. So, if any be still alive, it is in the wilderness we must seek them. Wherefore, one place is as another, until we learn differently."

How utterly right he was, speedily became manifest.

The pit-black murk of night slowly gave place to the pallid, wan daylight wherein no actual sunlight ever shone, and as we gathered up our Blastors and other impedimenta, preparatory to setting forth, Toj Qul raised a hand in warning.

There was no need for speech. We all heard what he did. I think the dead must hear that infernal, discordant din every time it is sounded. Describe it? I cannot. There are no words!

When our ears had somewhat recovered from the shock, Vir Dax shook his head.

"O-o-o-f-f-f!" he exclaimed. "To hear *that* very often would produce madness! It is agony!"

"Perhaps," growled Hul Jok. "But I have already gone mad because of it—gone mad with curiosity! Come along!"

He was commander. We went, leaving our Aethir-Torp to care for itself. But never again were we thus foolish.

We proceeded warily, spread out in a line, each keeping within sight of the next. The noise had come from the north side of the flat, and thither we directed our steps. Well for us that we were hidden by the trees and bushes!

As one we came to a sudden halt, drew together in a group, staring amazed, incredulous, horrified.

We were at the very edge of the high-bush, and before us was open space clear to the foot of towering cliff-walls, which rose sheer to some ten times the height of a tall male.

Half way up this there stuck out a broad shelf of rock, extending completely across the face of the cliff from the western end to the eastern, and at regular intervals we could perceive large, rectangular openings, covered, or closed, by doors of some dully glinting, leaden-hued metal.

And all the space between the edge of bush-growth and foot of cliff was occupied by the same sort of loathly monstrosities as we had previously encountered! There they lay, expectant, apparently, for their attentions were seemingly concentrated upon the shelf of rock high in air above them.

A door close to the western end opened and a procession emerged therefrom. At last we had found—

"Great Power of Life!" ejaculated Mor Ag profanely. "Those beings are no Aerthons!"

And he was right. Aerth never had produced any such type as we then beheld!

They had faces, and they had not faces! They had forms and they were formless! How may I describe that which baffles description? We are accustomed to concrete, cohesive, permanent types of form and faces, and these were inchoate! Never in any two moments were their aspects the same. They elongated, contracted, widened, expanded. At one moment the lower parts of one of these beings would apparently vanish while the upper parts remained visible, and again, conditions were reversed. Or a front aspect faded instantaneously, leaving but the rear section visible, only to promptly reverse the phenomenon. Or a left side disappeared, leaving the right side perceptible, then—but picture it for yourself! I have said enough!

It made me dizzy; it provoked Mor Ag because he could not name them! It enraged Hul Jok, inflamed him with desire to attack the whole throng, shatter them—why, he could not have told, but looking at them made him feel that way.

Ron Ti was mildly curious; Vir Dax frantic with ambition to study such beings—our Lady of Bliss deliver *me* from the curiosity of such as Vir Dax, his methods of study!

Only Toj Qul and Lan Apo remained unperturbed: Toj Qul because he is a diplomat, therefore in no wise startled or amazed at, or by, anything. And Lan Apo was contemptuous, for as he looked at them, any race thus shifting as to bodily aspect must inevitably be shifty as to minds, and he had naught but despisal for a liar of any sort. Strange argument, strange stimulus to courageousness, yet perhaps as good as any!

Only one permanency had these beings—and even that fluctuated. They were of a silvery color, and they were black, of that blackness which is blacker than black. Later, we learned what manner of beings these were, and whence they came to afflict Aerth with their presences.

They formed in a row well back from the shelf-edge, and then, from out the same door from which they had emerged, came another procession, or rather, a rout or rabble. These were, as Mor Ag at once asserted, unmistakably Aerthons. But how had that once wise and mighty race fallen! For these men were little better than brutes. Naked, round-shouldered, bowed of heads, cringing, shambling of gait, matted as to hair, and bearded—the males, at least—and utterly crushed, broken, dispirited!

It had long been a proverb on all the inhabited planets, "As beautiful

as the Aerthon women;" but the females we were then beholding were, if anything, more abject, more deteriorate, than the males.

Many things became apparent to us who stared at these poor unfortunates. Very evidently, some *things*, from some *where*, had enslaved, debased that once mighty race who were, or had been, second to none in all the universe—and this, *this*, was the result!

HUL JOK shifted his feet, stirred uneasily, growling venomously deep in his throat. Despite our giant's ferocious appearance, his heart was as a little child's, or like that of a girl, gentle, tender, and sympathetic where wrong or oppression dared rear their ugly heads. And here, it was all too apparent, both those pit-born demons had been busily at work.

The rabble of Aerthons halted at the very edge of the shelf, grouped together, about equidistant from either end of the long line of the Things we could not name. And as the Aerthons stood there, the animate abhorrences on the ground fixed their malignant eyes upon the wretched creatures, the triangular mouths gaped wide, and from all that multitude of loathly *blobs* came beating against our shrinking, quivering, tormented ear-drums that same brain-maddening discordance we had previously heard, even before we left the Aethir-Torp.

Of a sudden the Things standing behind the Aerthons ceased *flickering*, became fixed as to forms, although the change was anything but improvement. For, although they became in shape like other living, sentient, intelligent beings, their faces bore all evil writ largely upon them.

Acquaint yourself with all depravity, debauchery, foul indecency ever known throughout the universe since the most ancient, forgotten times, multiply it even to Nth powers, limitless, and then you have not approximated their expressions!

Personally, even beholding such aspects made me feel as if, for eons uncountable, I had wallowed in vilest filth! And it affected the others the same way, and we knew, by our own experience, what had befallen the Aerthons!

Had such foul things once gained foothold on the great central sun, even the radiant purities of that abode of the perfected would have become tainted, polluted by a single glance at such unthinkable corruptiveness!

They, the Things, slowly raised each an arm, pointed at one Aerthon in the group. He, back to them as he was, quivered, shook, writhed, then, despite himself, he slowly rose in the air, moved out into space, hung above the *blobs* that waited, avid-mouthed. The Aerthon turned over in the air, head down, still upheld by the concentrated wills of the things that pointed. . . .

Breathless, my eyes well-nigh starting from my head at sheer horror of what must in another moment befall, I stared, waiting the withdrawal of the force upholding the wretched Aerthon.

Half consciously, I saw Hul Jok's Blastor swing into line with the poor shrieking victim, and, just as he commenced dropping toward those triangular, gaping, hideous orifices which waited, slavering, saw him vanish—and silently blessed Hul Jok for his clemency and promptitude.

Then, momentarily, we all went mad! Our Blastors aimed, we pressed the releases, and swept that line of things. And, to our aghast horror, nothing happened. Again and again we swept their line—*and they were unconscious that aught was assailing them!* The deadly Blastors were impotent!

Ron Ti first grasped the situation.

"These Things are not 'beings'—they are but evil intelligences, of low order, crafty, vile, rather than wise! They are of too attenuate density—the vibrations of disintegration cannot shatter, but pass unfelt through their atomic structures! We can do naught save in mercy slay those poor Aerthons, and destroy those foul corruptions which wait to be fed."

We did it! It was truest kindliness to the Aerthons. Yet, despite the seeming callousness of our deed, we knew it for the best. And one thing it proved to us—low as the Aerthons had sunk, they had not fallen so far from their divine estate but that in each the silver spark that distinguishes the soul-bearers from the soulless, was still present. For as each body resolved back to the primordial Aethir from whence it was formed, the silver spark, liberate at last, floated into air until in distance it disappeared. Then we turned our attentions to the blob-things.

But even as we smote the filthy Things, we noted that the strange beings on the rock-shelf had grasped the fact that a new phase of circumstance had entered into Aerth's affairs. They stood, amazed, startled, bewildered for a space of perhaps a minute, then passed into activity with a promptitude well-nigh admirable.

Several of them calmly stepped from the rock-shelf into air and came hurtling toward us. In some way they had sensed our direction. In no time, they hovered above us, descended, and confronted us.

One, evidently of importance among his fellows, made articulate sounds, but we could not understand. Nor did we wish to! For with such as those, there can be but one common ground—unrelenting war!

And so, again and again we tried the effect of the Blastors, and, as previously, found them impotent. I caught Hul Jok's eye. He was fairly frothing at the mouth with wrath—literally.

The Things, close by, seemed to emanate a vibration that was abhorrent, stultifying. Little by little I felt a silent but urgent command to start toward the foot of the rocky cliff. Unthinkingly, I took a step forward, and Hul Jok's mighty arm slammed me back.

"I can feel it, too," he snarled at all six of us. "But," he thundered sternly, "I command you by the Looped Cross itself, that you stand fast! 'Tis but their *wills!* Are we babes, that we should obey?"

Suddenly—I laughed! Obey the wills of such as these? It was ridiculous. Answering laughter came from the rest of our party. Hul Jok nodded approvingly at me.

"Well done, Hak Iri!" he commended. "The Looped Cross thanks you—the Supreme Council shall give you right to wear it, for high courage, for service rendered!"

And he had promised me our planet's supremest gift, highest honor for—laughter! Yet, though I myself say it, perhaps the service was not so trivial after all. For there is, in final analysis, no weapon so thoroughly potent against evil as is laughter, ridicule! To take evil seriously is to magnify its importance; but ridicule renders its venom impotent, futile. Try it, you who doubt—try it in your hour of utmost need!

The Things became all black, no silvery tints remaining. One attempted to seize me, thrust me in the desired direction. Something—I had not known that it lay dormant within me—flamed into wrath. My hand closed, became a hard knot, my arm swung upward from my side with no volition on my part, and my fist drove full into the face of the Thing—left a horrible, blank orifice which slowly filled into semblance of a face

again. The Thing emitted a strange, sobbing, gasping squawk of pain.

"Aho!" shouted Hul Jok, gleefully. "They may not be shattered nor slain, but—they *can* be hurt!" And he swung his Blastor up as a truncheon and brought it down full on the head of the nearest. The stroke passed through the Thing as through soft filth, yet that Thing, evidently having enough, rose hurriedly into air and sped to safety, followed by the rest.

"Back to the Aethir-Torp!" commanded Hul Jok, and we retreated as swiftly as legs would take us. And at that, we did not arrive there first.

To our dismay, we found it in possession of a horde of those Things. They were all over it, even inside, and worse still, all about it on the ground were Aerthons, a great crowd of them formed in solid masses, all facing outward, bearing in their hands long, shimmering blades of brightly glinting metal, sharp as to points, with keen cutting edges.

"Swords," gasped Mor Ag. "I had thought such weapons obsolete on Aerth ten thousand years ago! Ware point and edge!"

"*Hue-hoh!*" shouted Hul Jok. "The Blastors, quick!"

Oh, the pity of it! I know that tears streamed from my eyes before it was finished. Ron Ti was equally affected. Hul Jok himself was swearing strange oaths, and, had it not been for Lan Apo, I doubt if we had had the necessary fortitude to go through with the ghastly affair. But as the silver sparks floated upward, a smile, almost beatific, came upon his set, white face.

"But they are rejoicing!" he cried out to us who grieved even while we smote. "I can feel their gratitude flowing to us who give them release from a life which is worse than death. They are glad to depart thus painlessly!"

And thereafter, we sorrowed no more.

THE Aerthons were almost all disposed of when Mor Ag shouted: "Catch one or more of those slaves —alive! I would question—"

Hul Jok leapt forward, caught one by the wrist, wrenched his blade from his hand, slammed him against the hull of the Aethir-Torp, knocking him limp, threw him to us; and dealt likewise with another.

Meanwhile, our Blastors played unrelentingly, and presently there were no more of the unfortunate Aerthons to be seen. Yet, the Things who, through sheer will-force alone, had compelled the Aerthons to face annihilation—for they could not fight; the Blastors slew from far beyond reach of sword-blade or hurled rock—those Things still held our Aethir-Torp. Surely, Our Lady of Venhez kept them from guessing that they had but to slide the stud atop one of the great Ak-Blastors from the white space to the black one, and we—ugh! Well for us that there was no Lan Apo among them to catch our thoughts!

A long while afterward, we found out that they were acquainted with the principle of the Ak-Blastors—and I can only account for their not using those on us by the supposition that they wished to capture us alive in order to gratify their fiendish propensities, so refrained from slaying us, willing to go to any lengths rather than do so, for the dead can in no wise be made to suffer!

We drew back, shaking from excitement and from the strain induced by their evil minds, or wills, beating upon us, for, though they could not make us obey, still that force they directed was almost solid in its impact. Our craft was still in their possession, and we were standing on open ground, and sorely perplexed as to how we were to regain possession of our Aethir-Torp.

Hul Jok, war prince, solved our dilemma. He grasped a young tree, thick as his wrist, tore it from the ground, broke it across his knee—

"Club!" he grunted. "Our million-year-ago ancestors used such on Venhez. There are records of such in the Central War Castle!"

Hurriedly he prepared one for each of us, talking as he wrought.

"They can *feel,*" he growled, "for all that they may not be slain. Very well! We will beat them from the Aethir-Torp!"

And that is precisely what occurred. On Venhez I had, at times, worked with my hands, for sheer delight of muscle-movement. But never had I dreamed what actual hard work was until that hour, during which, club in hand, we stormed our own craft, until at last we stood watching the last of the Things as they rapidly passed through the air toward their cliff-abode—all but one, which we had finally cornered alone in a compartment into which it had strayed from the rest. We hemmed it about, beat it with our clubs until it cringed from the pain. Then Ron Ti thrust his face close to its face. . . .

We caught Ron's idea, added our wills to his, overbore that of our captive. It became confused, bewildered, shifted from silver to black, to silver again, the black became dull, smoky, the silver paled to leaden hue, the Thing crouched, palpitant with fear-waves, manifest in dim coloration!

"We have learned enough!" declared Ron Ti, solemnly. "Back to Venhez! This is matter for the Supreme Council, as I feared even before we started. Here we cannot cope with conditions: we seven are too small a force. Back to Venhez!"

"Nay," Hul Jok demurred. "Let us remain and clean Aerth of this spawn!" And he indicated the captive Thing with a contemptuous gesture of his foot.

But Vir Dax added his voice to that of Ron Ti; and I—I was eager to go—to stay—I knew not which. The others felt as I did. Both courses had their attractions—also their drawbacks. For myself, I fear me very greatly that I, Hak Iri, who ever held myself aloof from all emotions of violence, desiring clear mind that I might better chronicle the deeds of others—I fear, I say, that in me still lives something of that old Hak Iri, my remote ancestor who, once in the Days of Wildness of which our minstrels still sing, made for himself a name of terror on all Venhez for his love of strife.

But Mor Ag really settled the argument.

"We have this—Thing," he declared. "It must be examined, if we would learn aught of its nature, and that must be done if we hope ever to cope with such as it has proved to be in structure" (here an unholy light shone transient in the keen, cold eyes of Vir Dax), "and," continued Mor Ag, "we can, while on the return to Venhez, learn what has actually happened to Aerth from the two Aerthons—"

"One Aerthon!" interrupted Vir Dax. "The other died. Hul Jok knows not his own strength!"

He bent over, examined the living Aerthon and promptly brought him back to consciousness. Mor Ag spoke to him. The Aerthon brightened a trifle as he became assured we meant him no harm. He brightened still more when he observed that we held captive one of his former masters.

Then the Thing caught the Aerthon's eye, and Lan Apo hastily turned to Hul Jok.

"It were well to confine this—where the Aerthon may not win to it," he warned emphatically. "Otherwise the will of the Thing will compel the enslaved fool to assist it to

(*Continued on page* 183)

Harry Harrison Kroll—

BLOODY MOON

Author of "Fairy Gossamer"

AT RARE intervals, usually in the spring of the year, a singular phenomenon known as the "bloody moon" occurs in the cavernous region of Kentucky. The Indians whom Daniel Boone knew in this section had a tradition in connection with the peculiar occurrence to the effect that "the bloody moon brings swift wo to him that sees it."

Henry Pearson sat on the steps of his dwelling just after the fall of night. Through the timber along the top of the ridge he caught the first glow of the rising moon. Suddenly the orb shot above the line of timber top. Then for the first time in his life he had a clear view of the old Indian bloody moon. It fascinated him, while it horrified him. Seemingly there was nothing about the sight to occasion fright; yet something about it, some magnetic uncanniness, seemed to freeze the very blood in his veins.

For a full minute it glowed at him, then the planetary face brightened to its normal tint, and the bloody moon vanished as suddenly and with as little apparent reason as it had appeared.

Pearson did not regard himself as a superstitious person. Still, he reflected, he had ample basis for his present unnerved condition. The timbers of the house of Pearson knew to quake at the recurrence of the bloody moon.

The thing went far back into pioneer days. A century and a half before, the land of which his home was a part had been secured to old Alligator Pearson, a first settler, by patent from the territorial government of Kentucky. The aboriginal title was held by an Indian chief named Eagle Fire. In spite of his terror-inspiring name, the Indian was a peaceful old man; and Pearson, brutal and fearless, with a handful of pioneers, dispossessed the harmless old man and his tribe by the simple expedient of killing them. Only one was permitted to live—the old chief's daughter.

She was a pretty, fawn-skinned girl of sixteen; and Alligator Pearson took her to wife by clubbing her into submission. When the child was born the princess died. But she never gave in to her white husband in the spirit, for she died with a curse on her lips for the father of her babe. Her last words, reported by the lean women who waited on her in her sickness, were: "Live on, my son, and

avenge the blood of your people with the bloody moon."

When the boy was eighteen, Alligator Pearson died. It was, said tradition, the time of the year when bloody moon occurred. The neighbors found the stark form of the old pioneer in the trail leading to his cabin. He lay face downward in the path, without mark of violence on his person. Yet he had died in terror, with twisted face and staring eyes. Twenty years later, the second Pearson, by a white wife who followed the princess, was in like manner, at about the same time of year, assassinated. A kindred mystery shrouded his death. The bloody moon had been seen an hour previously by his wife, as she had gone down the road to the tobacco field to look for him, supper being delayed and growing cold, and she uneasy and fearful. She found him among the tobacco plants, face to the ground, eyes and mouth full of dust.

In his own lifetime young Pearson had twice known the shock of this swift, inexplicable visitation. The first occasion came about the time he was ten years old. Grandfather Pearson, third in line from the original pioneer, hale and hearty, had eaten his supper and retired, his bedroom being the roofroom under the gable. The rest of the family were in the living room below, his granny knitting, his mother enjoying her after-supper dip of snuff, and his father smoking. Suddenly the very oaken rafters of the old house quivered from the frightful scream. He dashed with his father up to the roofroom.

They found the old man alone, sitting starkly up in bed, his eyes wide and staring, the breath only a moment since left his body. They found no sign on the old man's person more than a tiny abrasion on his gray, hairy chest. But the time was spring of the year, at the full of the moon; and the flood of light through the window upon the puncheon floor was as red as blood.

When he looked again, the glow had mellowed to its normal milk-white. Was it the bloody moon that had killed his grandsire? The doctor pronounced the cause heart failure. Who could deny that the practitioner was correct in his diagnosis? For often enough the human heart does fail when the sins of the father begin their grim visitation down the generations.

The details of his own father's taking-off he did not often reflect upon. That tragedy was still too poignant, too recent. The time was a year before, at the first full moon in May. His father had visited Bowling Green that day, making the trip on mule-back. He was expected home before sundown, but something must have delayed him, for night fell and he had not returned. The moon had risen when mule and rider appeared at the front gate.

It was his father's custom to dismount there and halloo for some of the boys to come out and put up and feed the mule. This time no such familiar call came. Going to the door to see why his father did not dismount and come in, young Pearson saw beast and rider, statuesque in the red flood of moonlight, in a vivid vision of tragic death. The mark of the curse of the Indian bloody moon was written indelibly on the sagging lifeless body of his parent. He carried the old man in and placed him upon the bed in the living room. But no one ever knew how he had come by his death.

Now he had just seen, in all of its terrible portent, the bloody moon. And the time was spring of the year, in the month of May!

PEARSON rose shakily, going into the house and closing and bolting the door. Perhaps it would be a useless

precaution, but he felt better. He would have to be cautious now, he told himself. What to guard against he had not the remotest idea; still, he would have to take care. It was the very vagueness of the enemy which troubled him most. If it were a man, he would have known easily enough some of the things to do. But this enemy was unnamable, supernatural.

It was about 9 o'clock in the evening when Pearson heard one of the mules down at the barn kicking its stall door. He was a farmer, and knew well enough that this might mean a valuable farm animal would break its leg if permitted to continue its foolish ways. He went out to the rear gate. The mule had escaped from its stall, dashed out of the lot by leaping the low fence into the tobacco, and was now snorting and cavorting about among the plants in great show of brutish agitation. He called to the beast, but with only indifferent results. Meanwhile he looked about, among the plants, and in the weeds and shadows back of the stable, for some signs of what had caused this unwonted disturbance. The mules were not in the habit of breaking out of their stalls and galloping about in this manner.

He clambered the fence, still speaking gently to the mule. The beast made a lateral swing down into a hollow at the spring course below the house. A short distance down the drain was one of the sinkholes characteristic of this cavernous limestone country. The frightened mule disappeared around the clump of bushes which fringed this opening.

Pearson could not have explained with any certainty afterward just what actually did occur. He had a vague impression of a dim figure that darted from out of the undergrowth and caught him from the rear; but neither his sight nor feeling could be relied upon. He suffered no sensation of physical contact, much less of pain. All he knew was that he suddenly found his steps arrested, his body sliding through the dust and dry leaves and brush which clung about the edge of the hole. Nothing he did served to stay his fall. He went tumbling head first into the hole.

It seemed that he fell into the very depths of the earth. In his frantic struggles to break his descent, he had scant idea of distance, but he dimly sensed the depth of the hole to be a hundred feet. He landed at the bottom finally with plenty of bruises but no broken bones, friction with the narrow walls aiding him to slack his speed.

He stood in absolute darkness. He stretched forth his hand cautiously, finding a continuation of the passage in a horizontal direction. The walls were smooth, and the passageway of a size comfortably to admit his body.

He had spent many an hour in exploring the caves of the vicinity; Mammoth Cave, a few miles away, he had known all of his life. When his first weakness had passed, he began crawling on hands and knees along the tube. It seemed to follow the general direction of the river bluff, a half mile away. He had never heard of a cave opening out on the face of the bluff; still, there could be something of the sort. Clearly he could expect to get out no other way, since escape back up through the sinkhole was impossible.

At times he paused and listened, thinking that something, perhaps the thing that had tripped him up, was following. But no sound reached his ears. It was a premonition, that was all—much more a spirit than anything resembling an actuality.

After a hundred yards he entered a cavernous chamber. The place was cool but the air was dry. Away off somewhere he could hear the dull roar of water. He surmised that the stream was Lost River, whose course lay for the most part in the bowels of

the earth, with its mouth at the foot of the bluff on Green River. If he could push through and not get drowned in its treacherous waters, he might eventually expect to live. Otherwise—but he did not think of that now.

From his pocket he drew a packet of cigarettes and matches. A man might as well die with a good smoke in his mouth as any other way. The light of the match would aid him in getting his bearings. But neither cigarettes nor matches were to be wasted! He put the roll of tobacco in his mouth and struck the match with his thumb nail.

The cigarette was never lighted. In the glow of the faint flame something stared at him—the thing that had been following him! Whether flesh or spirit he could not have said. It had the form of a woman; and it stood with folded arms and dead, emotionless eyes, peering at him. It looked through him, beyond him, rather than at him. In his nervousness he neglected to extinguish the match quickly enough, and in the interval the thing measured him—his strength and prowess—and the next instant it was upon him!

The first encounter was swift and illuminating. It was human, and it was merciless. He broke the first clinch with army tactics, sidestepped, then waited, drawing his breath as silently as possible so as not to betray his position—an expedient his assailant did not observe, for he could hear her labored breathing a dozen steps away.

He considered with some rapid mental calculation the disadvantages against which he worked. The other had the advantage of being on familiar ground and accustomed to the blackness of the place. She knew the exits of the place, if any existed, and how to cut off any chance retreat. But he reasoned that there must be an opening, if nothing more than the mouth of Lost River; and he must play for that one fact alone.

He doubted not that this was the inevitable math of the bloody moon. Whether a ghost of the Indian princess whom his ancestor had abused, or a descendant of that child born to transmit the curse, mattered little in the long run. The one thing which he accepted was that the curse was by way of being visited upon him; and in the law of probabilities he had scant chance of escaping the fate that had taken off, in turn, every male head of the house since the days of old Alligator Pearson. He did not know what the others had seen; what his grandfather had seen that night in the roofroom; or his father had encountered on his way home from Bowling Green. Nothing was vouchsafed him that he might defend himself intelligently. All he knew was that he was in for a fight to the bitter finish.

His wind came back to him presently. He reached forth a cautious hand. The floor was smooth. The walls were at the tips of his fingers. He strained his ear for some sound from the enemy. Her breathing, too, had become normal. He was, in fact, uncertain whether or not she was still there. Then with silent deftness he drew himself to his feet. He had hoped to sidestep swiftly upon gaining his equilibrium, duck again, and by a second lateral leap evade the attack his movement would inevitably bring about—unless he miscalculated the venom of his enemy. The plan was perfect, except that he had not taken account of his creaking joints. The snapping of his ankles betrayed his stratagem. The thing was upon him again.

He fought now with deadly earnestness. Nor was he a weakling. The labor in the tobacco fields had tutored his muscles in flex-

(*Continued on page* 180)

THE LURE OF ATLANTIS

by Joel Martin Nichols Jr.

THERE have been so many queer yarns in the newspapers about the sinking of the *Nautilus* that I, being skipper of the four-masted schooner *Brant,* which picked up Professor Charles Randolph, her only survivor, had better set down what really did happen down there in the Sargasso Sea.

The *Nautilus* was a steam yacht owned by Professor Amos Tyrrel, a wealthy English naturalist who had built a laboratory on the Cornish coast for the study of fish and seaweed. He and Randolph, who had been his assistant for twenty years, sailed in the *Nautilus* on the fifth of last February to do some research work in the Sargasso.

About this time the *Brant* was rounding the Horn out of Santiago, Chile, with a load of nitrates bound for Charleston, South Carolina. We struck a blow off the River Platte, and my old hooker lost her rudder. When things cleared up a bit we found oursslves pretty well out in the South Atlantic, but we rigged a jury rudder and headed northwest, figuring on dropping into some Cuban port to refit.

We struck the Sargasso about fifteen days later, and one fine morning we picked up this Professor Randolph, who was bobbing about in the open sea without the sign of a stick to keep him up. He was delirious when we brought him aboard, but after he came to his right senses he told me the queerest yarn I ever heard in my life—and I've heard some rather good ones in the forty years I've been following the sea. At first I put him down as crazy, but we'd no sooner got him aboard than hell began a-popping all around us right there on the *Brant.* When she finally got through, with two of her sticks missing and some of those hard-boiled birds in the fo'c'sl a-praying to the Almighty to save 'em from the devils of the deep, I made up my mind that maybe he wasn't so crazy after all. Then I had Randolph write down his story in his own words. I turned the original over to the authorities, and I suppose the British Admiralty has it now, but I copied the whole thing, word for word, in the *Brant's* log. The professor headed his story in big letters: STATEMENT OF DR. CHARLES WILLIAMS RANDOLPH CONCERNING THE SINKING OF THE NAUTILUS. And this is how it read:

Captain Andrew Waters of the schooner *Brant* has asked me to write down the story of the cruise of the *Nautilus* and of what befell her unfortunate crew and my colleague, Dr. Amos Tyrrel; and since it seems certain now that the *Brant* is not to suffer the fate of the *Nautilus* I have agreed to comply with his request.

It is perhaps unnecessary for me to delineate the relationship between Dr. Tyrrel and myself, since we were students of natural science together at the University of Edinburgh, twenty years ago. His accomplishments in the field of natural history, his studies and deductions from his exhaustive researches in the seven seas, his magnificent laboratory at Bournewell—all have given him an international fame which needs no emphasizing here from me. Suffice it to say that I may designate myself merely as an unworthy assistant in his great work, a humble satellite reflecting but a dim gleam from the splendor of his genius.

The world, when it has read this statement, will realize that these are strange words coming now from me, in view of the discord (mild term!) between Dr. Tyrrel and myself, which ended in the horrifying fate of the *Nautilus*. It was a discord which really had its inception five years ago, when Dr. Tyrrel exhibited the first signs of a divided interest in his life-work—an interest which led him away from his studies of undersea life and eventually found him devoting a large share of his time to archeological research.

He began this course by taking extended trips to Egypt and Central America, where he indulged in a comparative study of prehistoric architectures found on the two continents, professing to find between them a most amazing and wholly unaccountable similarity. Being engrossed with our original labors, I paid little attention to his assertions, until one day he came to me with the astounding announcement that he had evolved a tenable theory for the existence of the lost continent of Atlantis. In support of it he produced a vast number of photographs and other data, which purported to show that the pyramids found in the jungles of the Yucatan Peninsula were in reality small copies of the mighty piles found in Egypt, and that in other ways he had established an unanswerable argument for there being, in prehistoric times, a bridge of land between the African and American continents. It was his further contention that this land connection was the lost Atlantis, sunk beneath the waves of the south Atlantic ocean by some stupendous cataclysm. Egypt, in the heyday of its power, he asserted, had been naught but a poor outpost of Atlantis, reflecting only a dim glimmer of the splendors of that lost continent.

I must confess that I was bitterly disappointed in my colleague's new activities, for I had always held that the existence of Atlantis was a matter for metaphysical speculation and not one to engage the serious attention of men engrossed in the more objective sciences. I was gravely considering the necessity of voicing this conviction in the form of a gentle reproof to Dr. Tyrrel when he came to me one day in great excitement, brandishing before my eyes a piece of twisted metal.

"I have it, Randolph!" he fairly shouted at me. "This proves my theory. We've found Atlantis!"

Dr. Tyrrel was not given to practical joking, so I accepted the proffered metal, although with a preconceived skepticism. It was, I should say, a bit of framework done in bronze, very like the lintel of a door. There are many similar pieces in the temples of ancient Egypt. Carved on its surface, however, were some peculiar hieroglyphics which on closer ob-

servation I recognized as a type of cuneiform writing.

"Is this one of your Egyptian finds?" I queried, somewhat testily.

He waved me down in derision.

"This," he said, excitedly, "was pulled out of the south Atlantic Ocean on the flukes of an anchor dropped overboard by the tramp steamer *Pole Star.*"

"Ah, yes," said I. "A bit of submerged driftwood—"

"Nonsense!" he shouted. "Let me tell you about it. This vessel was caught in a storm somewhere down there—I've got the exact bearings—and her anchor was carried overboard by a large sea. It ran out almost the whole length of the cable before they could arrest it. When they finally had opportunity to attend to it they found that they were anchored. Think of it, Randolph—anchored out there in the Sargasso Sea where the Admiralty charts set the depth at nearly a mile! And when they got the anchor up they found this bit of bronze twisted about one of the flukes."

"A hoax!" I exclaimed. "They fooled you for a good price."

"I paid them nothing," he retorted. "They believe there was some subterranean upheaval throwing up a submerged island which by chance caught their anchor. But this bit of bronze never came from any submerged wreck as they believe. It came from one of the hilltop temples of the lost Atlantis. I have been able to translate this inscription. Do you know what it means?"

I admitted, caustically, that I did not.

"It means," he continued, " 'Wynona, Fair Princess of Atlantis.' There is something more but it is unintelligible. Wynona was the daughter of the last king of Atlantis."

"Small good it will do you," I put in. "You can never prove it."

"Indeed?" he retorted. "Then you may be interested to know that I've ordered the *Nautilus* to be ready for sea in eight days. I'm going down there with our diving equipment, and if it isn't too deep I'm going to explore this watery kingdom. You may come if you wish."

To make a long story short, I must say here that I was in reality more interested than I cared to admit, and it took no great urging to get me to go along. As Dr. Tyrrel had pointed out, we were already well equipped for the contemplated cruise. The *Nautilus,* Dr. Tyrrel's yacht, was virtually a floating laboratory in which we had spent many happy months in our explorations of the seven seas. On board was every apparatus imaginable to aid in deep sea work. Many of the devices had been invented or perfected by my colleague. Chief among these were two of the latest type diving suits—glass, steel and rubber affairs capable of withstanding excessive undersea pressures. Air was furnished to the wearer from tanks at the shoulders, and thus the danger of entangling life lines and air-hose was eliminated. Now, as I write, it seems to me almost a catastrophe that these invaluable accessories have been lost forever to the world.

We steamed out of our harbor at Bournewell on the fifth of February. Our voyage was uneventful, and three weeks later we were over the spot indicated in the nautical bearings furnished us by the captain of the *Pole Star.*

How well I remember that morning of our first sounding! How well I remember my own excitement, raised to the zenith by the enthusiasm of Dr. Tyrrel! And how well I remember the look on his face and the leap in my own heart when our sounding lead showed bottom at 280 feet, even as the captain of the *Pole Star* had said! We had indeed found a

submerged island. Whether it was Atlantis, I was still skeptical.

On the following morning, after having made the necessary preparations, we donned our diving suits and dropped over the side of the *Nautilus* into the sea. The spot, as I have already indicated, was approximately in the middle of the Sargasso Sea, but fortunately the surface of the ocean about us for the space of almost a square mile was free of the encumbering marine growth so peculiar to these waters. Thus, throughout the middle part of the day we expected to have the full value of the sun, thereby rendering unnecessary our electric searchlights, which were at best rather cumbersome and unsatisfactory for deep sea work.

Once in the sea, with our arms locked together we sank down—down—down. The water proved to be even clearer than we had hoped,—indeed it was almost abnormally transparent—and the shafts of the sun bade fair to penetrate quite as far as we desired to go.

We must have been descending slowly for nearly five minutes when suddenly Dr. Tyrrel loosed his arm and pointed with his gloved finger into the distance at my back. Turning my head within my helmet I saw, with a tremendous leap of my heart, that we were floating slowly down beside a beautiful, tapering pinnacle cut in a stone which appeared to be marble. Almost immediately, other and lesser pinnacles arose gradually about us, all of them glowing with vari-colored tints under the penetrating rays of the sun. Peering at some of the nearer ones, I saw that they were not some mere basaltic upheaval. They had been built by human hands.

We had found Atlantis!

The luminous glow from above had grown only slightly dimmer when we came gently to rest on what appeared to be the roof of some gigantic building—a roof which on closer observation I saw was of a thick but lucid crystal. All about us, on a kind of ridgepole of this temple (if such it was) I saw bits of curiously carved statuary, some of them apparently broken off by the undulating action of the deep sea currents. I would have paused over them in wonderment had it not been for Dr. Tyrrel, who, without hesitation, walked deliberately to the edge of the roof, where we again dropped off into the open water. A moment later we filtered gently to rest on a wide landing in a magnificent set of marble stairs. Glancing up with thumping heart I realized that we were standing at the very threshold of a splendid marble temple!

I would that I had the time or the talent for describing the magnificence, the awe-inspiring beauty of that scene. The walls towering up before us were of purest marble, slightly tinted a bluish green by the intervening water. Above our heads the shafts of the sun, only slightly dimmed by the lesser depth, played on those lofty spires with all the colors of the rainbow—tints shading away in all degrees of green, yellow, red, purple and blue. All about us on the stairs, standing for the most part on pedestals of what appeared to be pure gold, was some of the most exquisite statuary I have ever seen. Save for a few pieces carved in the form of some hideous beast, the like of which I have never seen on earth, the majority of the effects were extremely pleasing to the eye, and were evidently from the hands of the sublimest masters, who had far surpassed the best of Phidias or Praxiteles or the unknown author of the Venus of Melos. And yet the effect in totality was marred, as I have indicated, by the weird shapes of some of the beasts.

Then, too, there was a peculiar type of fungus growing over them, a kind

of seaweed unknown to me, which writhed and moved about the statuary like a thing alive. Some of it seemed actually to be coiling and uncoiling about the throat of a beautiful maiden, exquisitely carved in a pinkish marble, standing near us on the stairs. While I was charmed with the statuary, I must admit from the outset that this strange marine growth made me shudder. It was too uncannily alive. Even as we walked up the steps it recoiled from our footsteps to make way for us, but on looking back I noted that it returned again to its original resting place and seemed, in fact, to be following us up to the top!

At the head of the flight we found a pair of magnificent bronze doors, fortunately wide open. Oddly enough, both were heavily embossed with the figure of a winged animal not unlike the Egyptian Sphinx, part woman, part beast, and part bird. Although the doors were open, there was a tangle of that disgusting marine growth across the threshold, and Dr. Tyrrel with a gesture of impatience drew his knife to hack a way into the place; but even as he reached out to seize the stuff it recoiled and parted of its own accord, thereby giving us ready access.

Behind the bronze doors was a magnificent hall or foyer—I do not know how else to describe it. Half way down on our right was an open doorway leading into another and more spacious hall. Light from the ocean surface filtered into the place through the crystal roofs, but its intensity had been so greatly dimmed by the depth that we could not see clearly for more than twenty feet ahead of us.

Keeping well to the right so that we should not lose our way, we suddenly came face to face with the wall of the temple, noting with a gasp of admiration that its surface was covered with beautiful murals, apparently done in gold leaf with backgrounds of silver and a substance which might be ivory. Following the murals to the very foot of the walls, I noted that the floor on which we were walking had been done in the most delicate and intricate of mosaics.

We feasted our eyes on these beauties for several minutes, and then began following the wall at our right. I was in the act of commenting, mentally, on the absence of any furnishings or statuary in the hall proper, when suddenly there loomed before us in the greenish gloom a sizable marble cubicle. Coming nearer we saw that this was only the first of a series, mortised to the walls and standing about as high as our waists. A farther approach showed us that they were in reality a row of marble bins (to use a prosaic term). But what bins they were! What beauty, what contents! Pounds and pounds of jewels in every hue of the rainbow!

In one cubicle I buried my arms up to the elbow in the finest of rubies. From another I saw Dr. Tyrrel hold up a double handful of glittering emeralds. And diamonds!—a king's ransom in those alone.

My natural cupidity had seized hold of me, and I was for taking some of the gems with us, but I noted that Dr. Tyrrel—always the scholar—had tossed his jewels back into place; and then I shamefacedly followed his example. As we wandered farther down the hall, he informed me in the sign language we had developed for undersea work that he had concluded this was a mortuary chapel built on one of the Atlantean hilltops. If such it proved to be, he pointed out, we should soon come upon human remains, as the Atlanteans were credited by ancient chroniclers with having developed an amazing method of preserving their dead.

He was walking to one side and a little ahead of me as he imparted this

information, and he had scarcely finished when I saw him suddenly pause, peer ahead into the gloom, and then hurry forward, signing me to follow. In the greenish half-light I saw that we were approaching the end of the hall and that up against the wall was what appeared to be a huge marble altar.

And then I saw Wynona, Princess of Atlantis.

She was laid out there in her crystal tomb. Her eyes, with their glorious blue, were open and smiling; the roses were still in her cheeks; the very pink was in her fingernails! I suppose I was a bit wrought up, for I could have sworn that she moved and smiled up at us. Dr. Tyrrel had dropped on one knee, his hands clasping the sides of her bier; and now he crouched there, peering through the glass of his helmet at this lovely handiwork of God. I do not know whether he cried out with the marvel of it, but I know that I did, for the sound echoed and re-echoed within the confines of my glass-and-rubber prison.

Never before had I seen so beautiful a creature. Her tomb, or casket, all of clear crystal, was tipped upward so that she appeared to be reclining there, gazing out upon the hall below her. I could see every outline of her figure, every lineament of her features. I recognized immediately the Egyptian strain in the firm, straight nose, the perfect curve of the somewhat full lips, and the exquisitely modeled chin, tender yet imperiously firm, but withal—shall I say it?—slightly cruel. Her figure, slightly swathed in a filmy lace of gold, was perfection—possibly a trifle fuller at the hips than we are wont to approve nowadays, but perfect nevertheless.

I have spoken of her contours as purely Egyptian; but here the comparison ceases, for your ancient Egyptian was of a swarthy race, but this woman of Atlantis was of the fairest, with wide-opened eyes as blue as the cornflowers in our native England, and high-piled hair as yellow as the golden fillets with which it was bound.

I can see my reader shudder at the thought of thus gazing upon the dead, but I can tell him the sight of the lovely Wynona thus affected neither Dr. Tyrrel nor myself. I do not know how long we stood there, gazing at this exquisite creature, but it must have been a very long while, for my heart began to labor and my head began to throb in a way which told me that the oxygen in the tanks at our backs must be getting low.

Almost at that identical moment I felt an uncanny tightening and drawing sensation about my legs and ankles. Glancing quickly downward, I saw something that left me cold with horror. That loathsome seaweed, unnoticed by us, had crept into the chapel and was now seemingly growing in all directions over the floor. Some of it had entwined about my ankles, producing upon them a peculiar drawing and tugging sensation similar to that felt by a person walking in the undertow on a wave-washed beach. A swift glance over to my colleague produced in me a second and greater wave of horror. I saw him there lost in contemplation of the sleeping beauty and utterly unmindful that this hideous creeping thing had gone farther on him than it had on me. Indeed, it bade fair to cover his whole body.

During the course of my twenty years' exploration of the world under the sea, I have had many occasions to be terrified by the activities of plant and animal life there, but never have I been so submerged in horror as when I beheld that slimy weed squirming and twisting over our bodies. I must have cried out with the shock of it, for my head began to ring within my

helmet, and I clutched frantically for the knife at my belt, with the intention of hacking away the stuff at my ankles. My panic was short-lived, however, for no sooner had I reached for the weed than it uncoiled itself of its own free will, seeming actually to recoil at the dull gleam of my weapon.

Then, in two strides, I was at Dr. Tyrrel's side, intending to shake him back to a realization of our danger. Twice I grasped his shoulder before he paid the slightest attention to me, absorbed as he was in his contemplation of the smiling beauty in her crystal tomb. Finally, on my last somewhat rough importunity, he turned suddenly about and struck at me angrily with his hand. Almost immediately he must have regretted this act, for he signed to me that he was sorry, that he had forgotten himself for the moment.

I told him our oxygen was getting low, and pointed to the seaweed on his body, expecting him to be as horror-stricken as I had been. Oddly enough, however he did not seem to mind it, for he got to his feet and then, to my profound astonishment, the weed slowly unfolded and left him free.

With a last glance at our recumbent beauty we started from the hall, the seaweed drawing apart before our steps until a wide lane extended before us to the door. Outside on the terrace we prepared to loose our weights for our journey to the surface, but here a new and greater horror struck me.

Glancing down from our high point of vantage before the temple doors I saw in the mass of seaweed to the right and left of the staircase the ribs, the broken stumps, the twisted stern-plates, the battered superstructures, of many sunken ships. There must have been at least a hundred of them piled together helter-skelter, and heaven knows how many more lay farther down in the valley, where the rays of the sun did not penetrate!

I do not know how long we would have paused there gazing upon this scene of desolation had it not been that the increased difficulty of breathing warned us we could tarry no longer. Accordingly we slipped our weights and arose slowly to the surface, the rose-and-nile green of the Atlantean spires dropping slowly behind us. Only once did I look down in our journey, and not until then did I realize that the seaweed from the Atlantean temple had followed us—was in fact dogging our very heels! The stuff hovered there on the surface for a minute after we had climbed aboard the *Nautilus*, and then, as if pulled by some unseen hand from below, it slowly sank from sight.

I come now to a point in my story where I am loath to continue, for it must reveal in me an atavistic strain, the existence of which, until this last accursed cruise of the *Nautilus*, I had never suspected. As may be guessed from the preceding narrative, neither Dr. Tyrrel nor myself had ever married, our labors and researches having provided us with a diversity of experience which rendered unnecessary a venture into other fields of existence. Up until the time of the last cruise of the *Nautilus*, I can say with certainty that no woman, nor even any thought of woman, has ever disturbed the quiet tenor of my emotional life. For my colleague I think I can say the same. Hence it was somewhat a shock to me when I awoke during that night to find the lovely, sensual face of the exquisite Wynona haunting me, there in the darkness of my cabin.

For a time the sensation was a pleasant one: I felt a warm invigoration of my being, a sensuous flow of hot blood in my body which, although slightly tempestuous, was not without

a certain indefinable charm. I remember that I reached back to the headboard of my bed, seized there the enamel rail and stretched myself in the warm luxury of the tropic night. I felt remade—a new thing. I felt that in some indefinable way nature had poured into me renewed health, renewed youth. I wanted to arise, to pace about my cabin; I wanted to go to the decks of the *Nautilus*, to race up and down, cloaked only in the star-spangled robe of the equatorial night. I felt that I had the power to reach out and embrace the whole world.

For a time I lay there enjoying to the full this entirely new reaction and speculating on the psychological aspect of my new inspiration. In a little while, however, I began to grow too warm; the hot blood pounding through my veins became in a very few minutes a source of complete and profound and wholly inexplicable irritation. In vain I attempted to throw off the mood. In vain I attempted all the known tricks of wooing sleep; in vain I tossed and tumbled about with the gentle rolls of the *Nautilus*. Eventually I arose, drew on my dressing gown (for I had thrown aside my pajamas when the mood first came upon me), and thus attired strode out upon the decks.

Forward I saw a tiny ruby glow, which I took to be the lighted cigarette of the watch. Above, almost outshone by the brilliance of the Southern Cross, were the riding lights of the *Nautilus*. All was peace, excepting in my own brain.

I strode forward, my irritable mood pricking me onward, and reprimanded the watch for smoking on duty, although I knew such mild breaches of discipline had been winked at by both captain and mate on these long voyages. I remember how in surprize he flipped it overboard, the glowing end describing a perfect half-circle as it dropped into the sea. Somehow even that bothered me.

Presently I walked back toward the stern, and, rounding the corner of the after deckhouse, I came suddenly upon Dr. Tyrrel. He was standing there, half draped over the rail, and peering intently down into the sea. For some reason unknown to me I paused there watching him. He did not move; he might have been a statue of stone gazing over the rail. Again I felt a wave of unreasonable irritation, a veritable sweep of anger. Why should he be standing there peering so intently down into the sea? Why was he not in his cabin, where he belonged at this hour, gaining rest for the labors of tomorrow? Somehow I did not realize then that I was blaming him for the very thing which I myself was doing.

As I stood there watching him, he slowly straightened up and lifted his eyes to the stars. His lips were moving, and I thought that he sighed. It was then that I noted, seemingly for the first time in all our relationship, what a handsome figure of a man he was, with his clear-cut, aquiline profile, his full molded chin, his crisp, curly hair only slightly tinged with gray at the temples, and that magnificent figure with its tremendous shoulders, flat hips and gently sloping flanks. Somehow it made me feel small and puny and hopeless. All my new-found vigor drained from me in that moment, and I felt a strange, hot resentment against the man. Suddenly I had come to be old and worn and gnarled and terribly weary. Thinking thus, and without disturbing my colleague, I went back to my cabin and a sleepless vigil into the dawn.

THAT morning, while we were taking breakast, Dr. Tyrrel told me quietly that there would be no need for my going down that day.

(*Continued on page* 168)

DEAF DUMB and BLIND

by C. M. Eddy Jr.

Author of "The Ghost-eater," "The Better Choice," etc.

A LITTLE after noon on the 28th day of June, 1924, Dr. Morehouse stopped his machine befor the Tanner place and four men alighted. The stone building, in perfect repair and freshness, stood near the road, and but for the swamp in the rear it would have possessed no trace of dark suggestion. The spotless white doorway was visible across a trim lawn for some distance down the road; and as the doctor's party approached, it could be seen that the heavy portal yawned wide open. Only the screen door was closed. The close proximity of the house had imposed a kind of nervous silence on the four men, for what lurked therein could only be imagined with vague terror. This terror underwent a marked abatement when the explorers heard distinctly the sound of Richard Blake's typewriter.

Less than an hour before, a grown man had fled from that house, hatless, coatless, and screaming, to fall upon the doorstep of his nearest neighbor, half a mile away, babbling incoherently of "house", "dark", "swamp", and "room". Dr. Morehouse had needed no further spur to excited action when told that a slavering, maddened creature had burst out of the old Tanner home by the edge of the swamp. He had known that something would happen when the two men had taken the accursed stone house—the man who had fled; and his master, Richard Blake, the author-poet from Boston, the genius who had gone into the war with every nerve and sense alert and had come out as he was now; still debonair though half a paralytic, still walking with song among the sights and sounds of living fantasy though shut forever from the physical world, deaf, dumb, and blind!

Blake had reveled in the weird traditions and shuddering hints about the house and its former tenants. Such eldritch lore was an imaginative asset from whose enjoyment his physical state might not bar him. He had smiled at the prognostications of the superstitious natives. Now, with his sole companion fled in a mad ecstasy of panic fright, and himself left helpless with whatever had caused that fright, Blake might have less occasion to revel and smile! This, at least, was Dr. Morehouse's reflection as he had faced the problem of the fugitive and called on the puzzled cottager to help him track the matter down. The Morehouses were an old Fenham fam-

ily, and the doctor's grandfather had been one of those who burned the hermit Simeon Tanner's body in 1819. Not even at this distance could the trained physician escape a spinal tingle at what was recorded of that burning—at the naive inferences drawn by ignorant countrymen from a slight and meaningless conformation of the deceased. That tingle he knew to be foolish, for trifling bony protuberances on the fore part of the skull are of no significance, and often observable in bald-headed men.

Among the four men who ultimately set resolute faces toward that abhorrent house in the doctor's car, there occurred a singularly awed exchange of vague legends and half-furtive scraps of gossip handed down from curious grandmothers—legends and hints seldom repeated and almost never systematically compared. They extended as far back as 1692, when a Tanner had perished on Gallows Hill in Salem after a witchcraft trial, but did not grow intimate till the time the house was built—1747, though the ell was more recent. Not even then were the tales very numerous, for queer though the Tanners all were, it was only the last of them, old Simeon, whom people desperately feared. He added to what he had inherited—added horribly, everyone whispered—and bricked up the windows of the southeast room, whose east wall gave on the swamp. That was his study and library, and it had a door of double thickness with braces. It had been chopped through with axes that terrible winter night in 1819 when the stinking smoke had poured from the chimney and they found Tanner's body in there—with that expression on its face. It was because of that expression—not because of the two bony protuberances beneath the bushy white hair—that they had burned the body and the books and manuscripts it had had in that room. However, the short distance to the Tanner place was covered before much important historical matter could be correlated.

As the doctor, at the head of the party, opened the screen door and entered the arched hallway, it was noticed that the sound of typewriting had suddenly ceased. At this point two of the men also thought they noticed a faint effusion of cold air strangely out of keeping with the great heat of the day, though they afterward refused to swear to this. The hall was in perfect order, as were the various rooms entered in quest of the study where Blake was presumably to be found. The author had furnished his home in exquisite Colonial taste; and though having no help but the one manservant, he had succeeded in maintaining it in a state of commendable neatness.

Dr. Morehouse led his men from room to room through the wide-open doors and archways, at last finding the library or study which he sought—a fine southerly room on the ground floor adjoining the once-dreaded study of Simeon Tanner, lined with the books which the servant communicated through an ingenious alphabet of touches, and the bulky Braille volumes which the author himself read with sensitive finger-tips. Richard Blake, of course, was there, seated as usual before his typewriter with a draft-scattered stack of newly written pages on the table and floor, and one sheet still in the machine. He had stopped work, it appeared, with some suddenness; perhaps because of a chill which had caused him to draw together the neck of his dressing gown; and his head was turned toward the doorway of the sunny adjoining room in a manner quite singular for one whose lack of sight and hearing shuts out all sense of the external world.

On drawing nearer and crossing to where he could see the author's face,

Dr. Morehouse turned very pale and motioned to the others to stand back. He needed time to steady himself, and to dispel all possibility of hideous illusion. No longer did he need to speculate why they had burned old Simeon Tanner's body on that wintry night because of the *expression* it wore, for here was something only a well-disciplined mind could confront. The late Richard Blake, whose typewriter had ceased its nonchalant clicking only as the men had entered the house, had seen something despite his blindness, and had been affected by it. Humanity had nothing to do with the look that was on his face, or with the glassy morbid vision that blazed in great, blue, bloodshot eyes shut to this world's images for six years. Those eyes were fixed with an ecstasy of clear-sighted horror on the doorway leading to Simeon Tanner's old study, where the sun blazed on walls once shrouded in bricked-up blackness. And Dr. Arlo Morehouse reeled dizzily when he saw that for all the dazzling daylight the inky pupils of those eyes were dilated as cavernously as those of a cat's eyes in the dark.

The doctor closed the staring blind eyes before he let the others view the face of the corpse. Meanwhile he examined the lifeless form with feverish diligence, using scrupulous technical care, despite his throbbing nerves and almost shaking hands. Some of his results he communicated from time to time to the awed and inquisitive trio around him; other results he judiciously withheld, lest they lead to speculations more disquieting than human speculations should be. It was not from any word of his, but from shrewd independent observation, that one of the men muttered about the body's tousled black hair and the way the papers were scattered. This man said it was as if a strong breeze had blown through the open doorway which the dead man faced; whereas, although the once-bricked windows beyond were indeed fully open to the warm June air, there had been scarcely a breath of wind during the entire day.

When one of the men began to gather the sheets of newly-written manuscript as they lay on floor and table, Dr. Morehouse stopped him with an alarmed gesture. He had seen the sheet that remained in the machine, and had hastily removed and pocketed it after a sentence or two blanched his face afresh. This incident prompted him to collect the scattered sheets himself, and stuff them bulkily into an inside pocket without stopping to arrange them. And not even what he had read terrified him half so much as what he now noticed —the subtle difference in touch and heaviness of typing which distinguished the sheets he picked up from the one he had found on the typewriter. This shadowy impression he could not divorce from that other horrible circumstance which he was so zealously concealing from the men who had heard the machine's clicking not ten minutes before—the circumstance he was trying to exclude from even his own mind till he could be alone and resting in the merciful depths of his Morris chair. One may judge of the fear he felt at that circumstance by considering what he braved to keep it suppressed. In more than thirty years of professional practise he had never regarded a medical examiner as one from whom a fact might be withheld; yet through all the formalities which now followed, no man ever knew that when he examined this staring, contorted, blind man's body he had seen at once *that death must have occurred at least half an hour before discovery.*

DR. MOREHOUSE presently closed the outer door and led the party through every corner of the ancient structure in search of any evidence

which might directly illuminate the tragedy. Never was a result more completely negative. He knew that the trap-door of old Simeon Tanner had been removed as soon as that recluse's books and body had been burnt, and that the sub-cellar and the sinuous tunnel under the swamp had been filled up as soon as they were discovered, some thirty-five years later. Now he saw that no fresh abnormalities had come to replace them, and that the whole establishment exhibited only the normal neatness of modern restoration and tasteful care.

Telephoning for the sheriff at Fenham and for the county medical examiner at Bayboro, he awaited the arrival of the former, who, when he came, insisted on swearing in two of the men as deputies until the examiner should arrive. Dr. Morehouse, knowing the mystification and futility confronting the officials, could not help smiling wryly as he left with the villager whose house still sheltered the man who had fled.

They found the patient exceedingly weak, but conscious and fairly composed. Having promised the sheriff to extract and transmit all possible information from the fugitive, Dr. Morehouse began some calm and tactful questioning, which was received in a rational and compliant spirit and baffled only by effacement of memory. Much of the man's quiet must have come from merciful inability to recollect, for all he could now tell was that he had been in the study with his master and had seemed to see the next room suddenly grow dark—the room where sunshine had for more than a hundred years replaced the gloom of bricked-up windows. Even this memory, which indeed he half doubted, greatly disturbed the unstrung nerves of the patient, and it was with the utmost gentleness and circumspection that Dr. Morehouse told him his master was dead—a natural victim of the cardiac weakness which his terrible war-time injuries must have caused. The man was grieved, for he had been devoted to the crippled author; but he promised to show fortitude in taking the body back to the family in Boston after the close of the medical examiner's formal inquiry.

The physician, after satisfying as vaguely as possible the curiosity of the householder and his wife, and urging them to shelter the patient and keep him from the Tanner house until his departure with the body, next drove home in a growing tremble of excitement. At last he was free to read the typed manuscript of the dead man, and to gain at least an inkling of what hellish thing had defied those shattered senses of sight and sound and penetrated so disastrously to the delicate intelligence that brooded in eternal darkness and silence. He knew it would be a grotesque and terrible perusal, and he did not hasten to begin it. Instead, he very deliberately put his car in the garage, made himself comfortable in a dressing gown, and placed a stand of sedative and restorative medicines beside the great chair he was to occupy. Even after that he obviously wasted time as he slowly arranged the numbered sheets, carefully avoiding any comprehensive glance at their text.

What the manuscript did to Dr. Morehouse we all know. It would never have been read by another had his wife not picked it up as he lay inert in his chair an hour later, breathing heavily and unresponsive to a knocking which one would have thought violent enough to arouse a mummied Pharaoh. Terrible as the document is, particularly in the obvious *change of style* near the end, we cannot avoid the belief that to the folklore-wise physician it presented some *added and supreme horror* which no other will ever be so unfortunate as to receive. Certainly, it is

the general opinion of Fenham that the doctor's wide familiarity with the mutterings of old people and the tales his grandfather told him in youth furnished him some special information, in the light of which Richard Blake's hideous chronicle acquired a new, clear and devastating significance nearly insupportable to the normal human mind. That would explain the slowness of his recovery on that June evening, the reluctance with which he permitted his wife and son to read the manuscript, the singular ill-grace with which he acceded to their determination not to burn a document so darkly remarkable, and most of all, the peculiar rashness with which he hastened to purchase the old Tanner property, destroy the house with dynamite, and cut down the trees of the swamp for a substantial distance from the road. Concerning the whole subject he now maintains an inflexible reticence, and it is certain that there will die with him a knowledge without which the world is better off.

The manuscript, as here appended, was copied through the courtesy of Floyd Morehouse, Esq., son of the physician. A few omissions, indicated by asterisks, have been made in the interest of the public peace of mind; still others have been occasioned by the indefiniteness of the text, where the stricken author's lightning-like touch-typing seems shaken into incoherence or ambiguity. In three places, where lacunæ are fairly well elucidated by the context, the task of recension has been attempted. Of the *change in style* near the end it were best to say nothing. Surely it is plausible enough to attribute the phenomenon, as regards both content and physical aspect of typing, to the racked and tottering mind of a victim whose former handicaps had paled to nothing before that which he now faced. Bolder minds are at liberty to supply their own deductions.

Here, then, is the document, written in an accursed house by a brain closed to the world's sights and sounds—a brain left alone and unwarned to the mercies and mockeries of powers that no seeing, hearing man has ever stayed to face. Contradictory as it is to all that we know of the universe through physics, chemistry, and biology, the logical mind will classify it as a singular product of dementia—a dementia communicated in some sympathetic way to the man who burst out of that house in time. And thus, indeed, may it very well be regarded so long as Dr. Arlo Morehouse maintains his silence.

THE MANUSCRIPT

VAGUE misgivings of the last quarter hour are now becoming definite fears. To begin with, I am thoroughly convinced that something must have happened to Dobbs. For the first time since we have been together he has failed to answer my summons. When he did not respond to my repeated ringing I decided that the bell must be out of order, but I have pounded on the table with vigor enough to rouse a charge of Charon. At first I thought he might have slipped out of the house for a breath of fresh air, for it has been hot and sultry all the forenoon, but it is not like Dobbs to stay away so long without first making sure that I would want nothing. It is, however, the unusual occurrence of the last few minutes which confirms my suspicion that Dobbs' absence is a matter beyond his control. It is this same happening which prompts me to put my impressions and conjectures on paper in the hope that the mere act of recording them may relieve a certain sinister suggestion of impending tragedy. Try as I will, I cannot free my mind from the legends connected with

this old house—mere superstitious fol-de-rol for dwarfed brains to revel in, and on which I would not even waste a thought if Dobbs were here.

Through the years that I have been shut away from the world I used to know, Dobbs has been my sixth sense. Now, for the first time since my incapacitation, I realize the full extent of my impotency. It is Dobbs who has compensated for my sightless eyes, my useless ears, my voiceless throat and my crippled legs. There is a glass of water on my typewriter table. Without Dobbs to fill it when it has been emptied, my plight will be like that of Tantalus. Few have come to this house since we have lived here—there is little in common between garrulous country folk and a paralytic who cannot see, hear or speak to them—it may be days before anyone else appears. Alone . . . with only my thoughts to keep me company; disquieting thoughts which have been in no wise assuaged by the sensations of the last few minutes. I do not like these sensations, either, for more and more they are converting mere village gossip into a fantastic imagery which affects my emotions in a most peculiar and almost unprecedented manner.

It seems hours since I started to write this, but I know it can be only a few minutes, for I have just inserted this fresh page into the machine. The mechanical action of switching the sheets, brief though it was, has given me a fresh grip on myself. Perhaps I can shake off this sense of approaching danger long enough to recount that which has already happened.

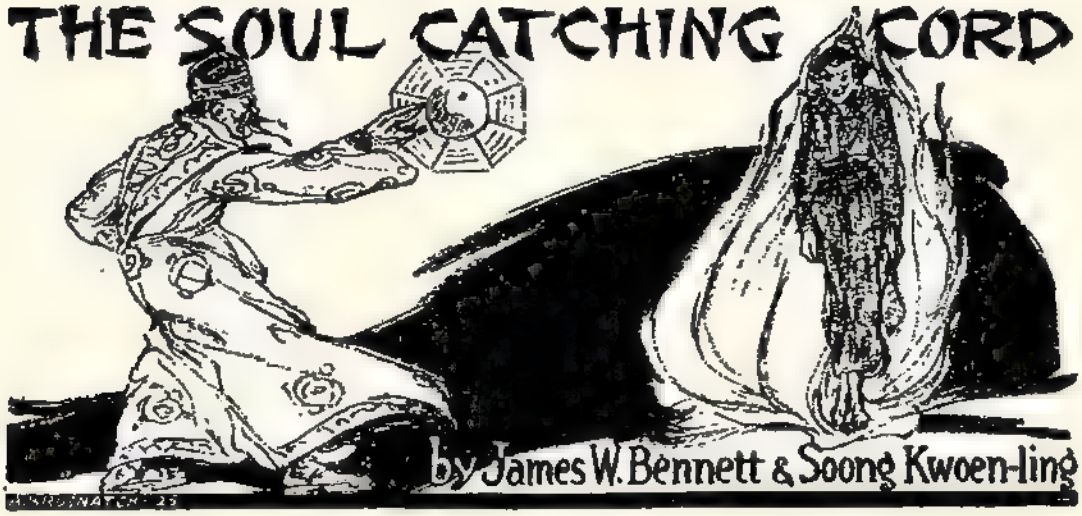
At first it was no more than a mere tremor, somewhat similar to the shivering of a cheap tenement block when a heavy truck rumbles close by the curb—but this is no loosely-built frame structure. Perhaps I am supersensitive to such things, and it may be that I am allowing my imagination to play tricks; but it seemed to me that the disturbance was more pronounced directly in front of me—and my chair faces the southeast wing; away from the road, directly in line with the swamp at the rear of the dwelling! Delusion though this may have been, there is no denying what followed. I was reminded of moments when I have felt the ground tremble beneath my feet at the bursting of giant shells; times when I have seen ships tossed like chaff before the fury of a typhoon. The house shook like a Dweurgarian cinder in the sieves of Niflheim. Every timber in the floor beneath my feet quivered like a suffering thing. My typewriter trembled till I could imagine that the keys were chattering of their fear.

A brief moment and it was over. Everything is as calm as before. Altogether too calm! It seems impossible that such a thing could happen and yet leave everything exactly as it was before. No, not exactly—I am thoroughly convinced that something has happened to Dobbs! It is this conviction, added to this unnatural calm, which accentuates the premonitory fear that persists in creeping over me. Fear? Yes—though I am trying to reason sanely with myself that there is nothing of which to be afraid. Critics have both praised and condemned my poetry because of what they term a vivid imagination. At such a time as this I can heartily agree with those who cry "too vivid". Nothing can be very much amiss or . . .

SMOKE! Just a faint sulfurous trace, but one which is unmistakable to my keenly attuned nostrils. So faint, indeed, that it is impossible for me to determine whether it comes from some part of the house or drifts through the window of the adjoining room, which opens on the swamp. The impression is rapidly becoming more clearly defined. I am sure, now, that

(*Continued on page* 177)

THE SOUL CATCHING CORD



by James W. Bennett & Soong Kwoen-ling

MOH-CHIEN should have lived in the days of Confucius, or tippled wine and made glorious lyrics to the moon with Li T'ai-po. For he was one of those now fast-vanishing folk, relic of a medieval scholastic day, a Chinese scholar and mystic. His faded, scarlet-rimmed eyes had peered into strange places. He had pieced together the legends on ancient stone tablets. He had muttered the talismanic words disclosed. Then he had watched the curtain of reality swing back. He had seen a forest of imploring arms, raised toward him, asking to return from that shadowy world, the Western paradise —the myriads who had tasted of the Yellow Springs.

Early one evening he was returning to his home, a village not far from the city of Soochow. The path was too narrow to admit a rickshaw, and he was walking, feebly. The distance before him was still ten *li*.

A wrack of clouds tumbled in a vast hurry across the sky, like breakers on the shore when the typhoon rages. And something resembling a typhoon was brewing to the southwest. Lightning flashed with fitful petulance. Moh-chien gazed upward, not without trepidation; old bones do not stand the buffeting of the water gods with impunity.

The weather was unusual, and unseasonable, for the mid-autumn festival. This vaguely troubled Moh-chien; the moon goddess must be angry, since she was veiling her face during the time that men wished to worship her.

With a howl, the storm suddenly broke; directly over his head it seemed. The night dropped like a gigantic cloak, a clinging sable velvet, stifling. Then rain, sheet upon sheet of cold, stinging musketry-fire.

Moh-chien shaded his eyes and peered through the deluge. At first he could make out nothing except that whirling gray-blackness. Later, he thought he could discern a wavering cluster of lights, a *li* away. A momentary lull confirmed his observation. A tiny hamlet. Staggering beneath the screaming menace of wind and rain, he made for the home with the nearest light.

As he neared the habitation he stumbled over a grave-mound and fell. He picked himself up with a groan. The brick wall of the mound seemed newly built; it had not crumbled and showered tile upon him.

Reaching the house he pounded on the door; but the typhoon's song was deafening—a Gargantuan roar. After a moment's hesitation Moh-chien undid the latch and entered. The tiny, open courtyard was empty. He pushed back under the eaves and philosophically sat himself down.

With the passing of a half hour the roar of the wind lessened, but the rain continued. At first he had thought the habitation empty, but now with the partial cessation of sound he could hear the murmur of voices directly at his back. He rose, to knock again at this inner door. As he was scrambling to his feet, a woman's voice rang shrilly, "I saw you! You smiled at her! You ogled at her! A brazen hussy! Her cheeks flaming scarlet with sin—and paint!"

"But, Mei-an," came a man's worried reply, "I swear I—"

His words were blanked by the torrent that poured forth: "I know! You would make her your 'small wife'! Her feet are bound—golden lilies—and she can do no labor. I will become your drudge—and hers. You would have me do her bidding. Never! Rather than that, I would—"

"Stop! You stress too much my smiling upon a singsong girl—"

"Aieeeeeee!"

Then shriek after shriek echoed through the court, mingled with the dying obbligato of the storm.

"Aieee! Aieee!"

Moh-chien frowned, pausing with his hand lifted to knock and demand entrance. Then he shook his head. He dared not break into this family quarrel. He knew the symptoms here, a fit of *ch'i*—"wrath matter," that queer Oriental form of hysteria which so often attacked his countrymen. He had heard women screeching on their housetops for hours. He had seen men, under its influence, stagger sightlessly to an enemy's door and thrust a dagger into their own bosoms. And in China to have men die on one's doorstep is a worse fate than death itself: the Gods do not forgive the living. *Ch'i.*

The woman's cries continued. The door opened, and Moh-chien hastily stepped back. A young man, little more than a boy in age, ran out, muttering. The husband.

Moh-chien leaned back and ruefully gazed out upon the storm, the steady downpour of rain. It was better to stay where he was, till the torrent slackened.

With the slow crawling gait of time the mournful wail of the woman changed to racking sobs.

The air grew perceptibly colder and danker.

The scholar shivered. There was a feeling, in that courtyard, as if the door of a crypt had been opened. A rush of wind, long pent up with dusty bones. . . .

In a distant corner a light appeared, a tiny point of flame. It flickered dimly for a moment, gave a desperate leap and went out.

The sobbing of the woman inside became dulled to catching, quick-drawn inhalations of breath. But now, from the corner of the courtyard, whence had come the light, he heard a scratching sound. A pause, then a mewing and whining in one.

An overmastering fear drove him to his feet and to the outer door of the house. Thick darkness was about him. Suddenly that grave-mound was illumined; blue lights began to dance about its new-bricked walls.

The sound inside was following him. He tried to console himself with the thought that he was an old man; if death were imminent, surely a place was prepared for him in that land of demigods who had once been scholars.

The noise whirled round and round like a top, in the brick-paved yard.

It neared him; but as it did so it ascended and gave place to the musical reverberation of a thousand peachwood temple bells.

At this, the grave-mound, with a great detonation, burst asunder. Perhaps the roar was a thunderclap, for the fields an instant before had been suddenly ash-colored, drenched in a great flood of lightning.

Moh-chien threw up his hands and ran back into the court.

There, all was still. A silence that pained his temples, like the sharp prickle of a hundred needles, then like the pressure of a gigantic vise. Black.

Ten minutes, perhaps it was an hour of this, moved lethargically, when the chuckle of a woman was heard. A senile chuckle, cracked and wavering. He gasped. That whirling sound had been filled with awful mystery; but this eery laughter was appalling.

Again that dancing cobalt light. It fused itself into the night, making the darkness transparent. The pupils of Moh-chien's eyes dilated.

In the courtyard appeared a woman, old, and dressed in somber black. Her face was pallid. Gold trinkets in her ears and hair glittered in that weird, unearthly light. Her step was soundless; she seemed to float rather than walk. Apparently without seeing Moh-chien she crossed the open space and entered the door at the left of the room in which the young wife was still sobbing.

Curiosity overwhelmed the scholar. He followed and stood at that door. The room she had entered housed the family shrine—a small Buddha, in red and gold lacquer.

Before the image was a long, carved table of teak; on this stood a pair of candlesticks, and between them a bronze incense jar, a *hyang-loo*.

The woman dropped upon her knees, with seeming reverence. She kowtowed three times, touching her forehead to the stone flagging. Rising, she picked up the *hyang-loo*. Furtively she took something from a pocket in her gown and tucked it under the jar, whose blackwood base offered room for concealment. Assuring herself that the object was concealed, she turned and vanished. The scholar rubbed his eyes. Gone! With her disappeared the cobalt light.

Frowning, Moh-chien stood at the door. He wondered, debated, then decided to investigate. He felt his way cautiously into the room. He groped for the incense jar. The roughness of its bronze cover met his fingers. He reached underneath, and felt something—coiled, inanimate, cold, repulsive.

He snatched up the object and thrust it into the pocket of his robe. Then he stopped and stood still, in wonderment. For the thought was flooding over him, with all the insistence of a mania, that he must not part with that slippery coil. He must give up his life, first. But he must never lose it. . . .

"Why do you look so downhearted, my child?"

A voice came suddenly out of the adjacent chamber, the room of the young wife. The tone of the questioner was singularly hollow and feeble.

"Why do you weep so bitterly?"

"It's unfair of my husband!" answered the young girl. "The 'flower' bed of our marriage will be deserted."

"He would take another wife?"

Moh-chien recognized it as the voice of the old woman who had chuckled.

There was a moment of silence.

"Y-yes. And then my life will be a mockery. Death were preferable."

"Good," replied the old woman. "It is fortunate for you that I am here. I am Vaung-tsan. I have the

power to bring healing to bruised hearts, to give you sweet revenge on your unfaithful husband."

"Then give it to me."

The old woman nodded.

"Inhale this current of fragrant air."

The young wife sighed wonderingly.

"Now, take that braided cord there, at the side of the brass-bound chest."

Followed a rustling sound.

"Fasten it here, to the beam above your head. Wait! Let me make a noose. . . . Peep through it. Now, —what do you see?"

The girl gave a hysterical laugh.

"What paradise is this? The light is glowing; it beckons. Have you been there?"

"No!" answered the old woman, rather unexpectedly to Moh-chien. And he heard her whispering, as if to herself, "But I *will* be there, this night."

Another rustling movement.

"But we delay. Are you ready, my child?"

The scholar softly opened the door and peered in. From the ceiling fell a braided, horsehair rope. Before it stood the young wife. She swayed slightly.

"Ay, lead on, Vaung-tsan *Tha-tha*. I will follow."

She draped the loop about her throat.

Moh-chien's brain insistently sent out message after message: to interfere, to aid, to stop her. But his body refused to answer. Instead he could only clasp that slippery coil the tighter in his numbed fingers. He turned to the old woman. She was watching the movements of the girl with intense excitement and eagerness, Moh-chien felt. Her withered hands clenched and unclenched rapidly. Her eyes glittered, like the cold fire of jewels.

The wife was standing now on the brass-bound chest, the loop about her throat. Catlike the woman crept up on her. Flecks of foam stood at the corners of the withered, sagging mouth.

The woman gave a low, triumphant cry, and pushed violently against the girl.

With a horrible snapping noise, the noose tautened. The small unbound feet could not touch the floor. The young wife gasped, once, and was silent.

"*Ey-ah!* I've caught you! You are mine! Your body hangs now! Mine! Quick! I must go to the *hyang-loo! There* is the cord that will catch your *soul!* And will ransom mine! . . . Will ransom mine! For three years I have waited for this hour."

Still muttering, the woman glided from the room. At the door, she brushed near Moh-chien, but did not appear to see him.

Once she had left the room, the blood seemed to flow again in his veins. The imperative messages now were answered. He rushed to the young woman and cut the cord. She sank limply at his feet. Already her body appeared lifeless, his delay fatal. As he knelt over her, he became conscious of twin points, dagger sharp, boring into his shoulders. The pain was excruciating.

He turned. The old woman stood in the doorway, gazing at him. About her now was a nimbus of fiery orange light. A smile, half of fear, half of derision, played over her chalky features. For the first time she seemed to be conscious of his presence. Moh-chien felt again that paralysis of mind and body creeping over him.

She approached him gracefully. Stretching forth a clawlike hand, she began, "Please give me back the cord."

"What cord?" he mumbled evasively, his voice coming as if from a great distance.

"The cord I placed under the incense jar."

"What—is it—for?"

"That is not for you to know. Give it back to me."

The hollow voice vibrated with intensity.

"Why?"

"Better you should not know, oh, mortal! Give it back to me or I will—"

"What?" It was a tremendous effort to speak the monosyllable.

"I will *force* you to!" Her voice rose shrilly.

But the scholar shook his head doggedly. The effort drained heavily on his will power.

The woman gazed searchingly at his face and seemed dazed to find him firm. She took three steps toward him and flung up both her arms. Darkness instantly enveloped them. Clammy. Like the dripping death sweat of a tortured body *in extremis.* Black. . . .

MINUTES. Deadly minutes of thick, cold blackness. Powers of evil unseen seemed to be struggling to reach him. His hand, grasping that coil in his pocket, had lost all feeling; but the fingers were still curved around its braided surface.

Finally he felt a current of warm, perfumed air. Out of the darkness slowly appeared the figure of a woman, young and ethereally lovely. She stood in a flood of rosy light which seemed to emanate from her exquisitely tapering fingers. Hers was the beauty of milk-white jade, imperial and flawless. Her robe, of shimmering white, held on its surface golden dragons—dragons that seemed to move. Her face was bloodless, except for two pink spots on her cheeks, unchanging, as if some grisly farceur had daubed carmine on the face of a corpse. Death blushing.

Painfully Moh-chien began to probe in his benumbed mind, back through the storehouses of his life, for words that warded off evil machinations, for phrases known to thrust back restless spirits into the world whence they had wandered. Once, even a few hours before, he had known such phrases; but now no answer came.

Her eyes beamed upon him, yet they showed no spirit of laughter. In her hands she held a shining string of baubles.

"Do you see this?"

The scholar watched the play of iridescent light.

"They are only the treasure of dead mollusks," he said.

"But these pearls are more precious than that cord in your pocket. Give it to me, oh, please! To you it is valueless. But to me—"

And, in a whisper, he heard the words, "—the cord that will ransom my soul."

That pain in his temple again.

"No."

"You can have this—"

She took a step toward him and offered the gleaming strand of pearls.

"—if you will give me back the cord."

The voice came to Moh-chien, an echo sibilated by a shadow.

"No."

"So? You refuse? Then bitter wo unto you!"

She took another step near him and exhaled a current of hideous black smoke. It surrounded him, like a cloud.

Instinctively he closed his eyes and buried his nose and mouth in his sleeve. The smoke made his face tingle.

"Will you give my cord back now?" she asked.

"No!" came his muffled answer from the folds of the sleeve.

Again he prodded his unwilling brain, back along a path filled with dim-cut inscriptions and musty scrolls. Some one of those ancient archives contained foils for this

malign necromancy. But still the answer eluded him.

The sharp prickling sensation of the smoke died away. He ventured to open his eyes. Blackness. Again that blackness.

Would the horror of it never cease? None of the fiendish arts of this woman preyed upon him like this.

But this time Moh-chien did not have long to wait. Perhaps the old woman was too eager. A glow appeared before him. It was that now-familiar cobalt flame, and the visage of the old specter.

She took a step forward and frowned. With a leisurely movement she grasped her own throat with both hands. They were like claws, those hands. He saw the tendons suddenly stand out.

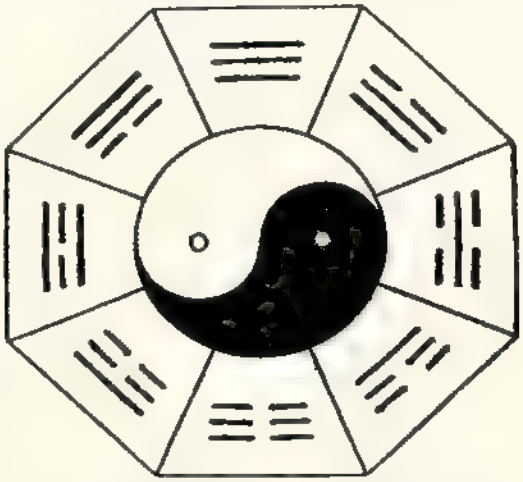
Behind him, the young wife stirred and moaned in some extreme of agony.

Slowly the pressure appeared to deepen, and the old woman's eyes began to bulge, as if they would come out of their sockets. A black, lengthening tongue was slowly forced between her teeth. Dark blood trickled from the corners of her mouth. Out of her throat came the gurgling plea, "The cord—oh—give—"

Moh-chien raised his arm to stop that horrible self-strangulation. Something in the movement of his hand. . . . It was a Chinese mystic's habit: to draw certain ancient characters in the air. By doing so, the scholar loosed their magic properties and made them potent.

Something in that movement opened wide the floodgates of memory. And over the barren spillway came a score of answers, from the "Canon of Changes."

AUTOMATICALLY he chose the basic character. First he drew, with his finger, a circle in the air. This represented *T'ai-gee,* the Great Monad. He bisected the circle with an airy S-like line. Thus he obtained the *Yang* and the *Yin,* the male and the female principles which began the process of evolution. This not only cut a clean division between Man and Woman, but also (more important) between day and night, between the world of substance and the realm that is of shadows.



MOH-CHIEN'S DIAGRAM

As he finished this, the diabolical woman tumbled back several paces. A look of fright came over her face.

Mechanically Moh-chien continued his diagram of the foundation character of this wondrous book of antiquity. The blue nimbus about the woman began to fade; her features became more shadowy. Her hands dropped away from her throat. The young wife, back of him, ceased to groan. The air he breathed became less dank and cold.

He bent forward over this drawing he was making. When again he looked up, he now discerned a bleached skeleton, standing in a foggy light.

The skeleton shook and swayed, its rotted cerements clinging to its body in tatters. Backward and forward it moved, like an inverted pendulum.

(*Continued on page* 176)

THE GRIM PASSENGER

by Donald Edward Keyhoe

BECAUSE of the ridicule generally attaching itself to anyone admitting the possibility of the supernatural, I have until now refrained from setting forth the details of certain events which apparently led to a widely known and regretted disaster in mid-Atlantic several years ago. But the opening of the tomb of King Tut-Ankh-Amen and the attending publicity brought the matter back to my mind, and I shall offer it to the public to believe or not as it chooses. Even now I do not admit that there was anything supernatural about it; that there was something strange and terrible about it no one will deny.

For obvious reasons, certain names have been omitted or changed, but with these exceptions I have related everything exactly as it occurred. In my position as secretary to the president of the B———— Museum of London I have charge of the sending out of expeditions in search of valuable specimens, ancient and otherwise. For some time during the year of 19__ we had been on the trail of a mummy-case supposed to contain the dead body of a certain king whose name is to be found in history of centuries long past. Creditable information having at last been obtained as to the location of the tomb containing the mummy, I sent for a man whose name may be remembered even now as that of a famous museum supplier, a man who was well versed in such work and who was thoroughly dependable because of his matter-of-fact and common-sense nature. I shall call him Thomas D. Stevenson. Acquainting him with all the facts at my disposal, I gave him an order for such equipment as he would need and sufficient funds to cover all expenses of the trip. Two days later he left London for a spot not very far from that at which the present activities are taking place. Less publicity was given the matter, however, than at the present time because of reasons which concerned a slight difficulty in regard to the law.

After reaching his destination, Stevenson encountered obstacles in obtaining guides and other natives to help in the excavation. They were finally obtained, however, and after considerable effort the Englishman and his party located the long-lost tomb; within a few days the main entrance to the great vault was partially uncovered and preparations were made for opening it, when the natives suddenly drew off to one side, muttering and casting awestruck looks at the

door, which bore in ancient language an inscription that had been cut into the metal that formed the outer part. When Stevenson peremptorily ordered them back to their work, the head native approached him, tremblingly, and pointed out a little, dried-up old man who seemed to hold a position of importance among the others.

"Master," he said, "he has told us the meaning of the words and we are afraid."

"You fools!" Stevenson stormed. "What is there on that door to frighten men living hundreds of years after it was erected?"

"It says," answered the cowed native, "that he who sleeps there has left his spirit to guard his body and that any who touch it shall die."

"Damned nonsense!" roared the other, and went on trying to drive the men back to their work.

But neither threats, cajolery nor offers of higher pay would move them. The little old man had frightened them with his translation of the words on the door, and the inbred superstitions of generations did the rest.

Seeking a full solution of the problem, Stevenson asked the old native for a translation of the warning, and this is what he heard: "Turn ye away lest ye become as I. On them who heed not my warning shall my curse fall, and it shall so be until my body rests again undisturbed."

At the bottom of these words was a seal bearing the profile of a crowned head. Even Stevenson felt a vague uneasiness and misgiving at this, but he shook off his doubts with a laugh at his momentary weakness, and again attempted to force the men to the work. Finding them determinedly against it, he dismissed them and set about getting other aid, which was no small matter in that out-of-the-way place.

Finally a nondescript outfit of drifters and ne'er-do-wells was assembled and the vault was opened. To the relief of Stevenson and the disappointment of the men, there was very little treasure found, although this is now believed to have been in a second valut near by. The much desired mummy-case, however, lay in state on a terraced stonework, covered with symbols and signs which later proved to be an almost complete history of the life of the dead king. On closer examination Stevenson was startled to find reproduced in the center of the case the identical warning that had been seen on the door. For a moment the Englishman had an almost overpowering impulse to drop the whole thing and return to England and the museum empty-handed; he quickly stifled this and curtly gave the order that started the body of the dead monarch on its journey far from his wished-for resting place to the bustling, unmindful city of London.

Then began the journey to the nearest seaport. Singularly restless and impatient for one of his stolid nature, Stevenson rushed his men, already tired from work, until fever set in and delayed him while he attended to the sick. Instead of yielding to rest and recognized remedies the fever took a more malignant form, and before the party reached their port five men had succumbed. The others, a curious fear having descended upon them, cursed the mummy, Stevenson and the expedition heartily and impartially, nor did they lose any time in severing their connection with the outfit, once the mummy-case was on board ship and their pay was in their pockets.

Stevenson, his mind wearied and in a turmoil from the trying happenings of the preceding weeks, turned in at his hotel hoping to enjoy a good rest, but instead tossed and turned throughout most of the night. Arising early, preparatory to embarking on his ship, he was astonished

to find a local police official awaiting him.

"What is it?" demanded the Englishman bruskly, short-tempered from worry and lack of sleep.

"Sir, it is that we wish you to identify some bodies," answered the smiling, suave official, as if he were suggesting a stroll in the cool of the morning.

"Bodies?" gasped the other. "Whose—what bodies?"

"Sir, they are five men who are said to have come with you from Z_____ yesterday. Last night they became very drunk in one of the places down on the old docks, and started a brawl in which several were hurt and three of your party were killed; the other two attempted escape when our men arrived, and were fatally wounded before they submitted to arrest. One died at once and the other but a few minutes ago."

It was with an effort that Stevenson shook off the depression that this news brought to him, and complied with the police regulations in identifying the dead men and giving his rather slight knowledge of each one. This done, he hurried back to his hotel and at once proceeded to his ship, endeavoring all the time to shake off a foreboding that had begun to be a very part of his mind. Insistently the thought hammered itself into his every waking moment and brought him sinister dreams, that of all the men who had entered the forbidden tomb and had defied the warning that had protected the dead king for centuries, he alone still lived. Again and again he told himself that the deaths were accidental and in the course of natural events. Fever was a common thing, and scores of men were killed in just such quarrels as had occurred on the preceding night. Then before him would come a vision of the mummy-case with its silent warning, and his bolstered-up confidence and courage would fall like a house of cards. He had been guiltier than the men who helped him in violating that warning. How long would *he* escape the vengeance of the power that had taken the lives of the rest?

Already unwell from his efforts in the desert, Stevenson rapidly became worse, until by the time his ship had reached England he was a mental and physical wreck. Then it was that we of the museum heard of his plight and went to his aid, removing him to a hospital and the mummy-case to the basement of the museum.

At the bedside of the sick man several of the lesser officials of the institution listened to his story, but when he related the details of the horrors that had attended every moment since the removal of the dead king from the tomb, they raised their eyebrows and nodded to each other in expression of their belief that the heat and the solitude had been a little too much for him. Little attention was paid then, when at the close of his narrative Stevenson raised himself up on one shoulder and, his eyes gleaming in a fierce, unnatural way, cried out, "Don't let them keep the mummy! Have him taken back! Take him back before it is too late!" An attendant rushed up quickly, and soothingly pushed the sick man back into his bed, while the others withdrew, hardly giving a second thought to the words of the man they had just left, feeling only a natural sorrow at the affliction which his long stay in the tropics had brought him.

Two days later Stevenson died, raving about the mummy and uttering warnings to the effect that it should be taken back to the tomb. His words were ascribed to delirium, and no attention was paid to them at the time.

Then the mummy-case was brought to the central exhibition room and placed within a case especially prepared for it. While someone was studying the symbols on the case the inscription was noted and its meaning

found by referring to our records of ancient languages. But the thing was taken more as a joke by everyone in the museum than as anything of serious meaning.

And then, without farther warning, tragedy invaded the museum itself. For the very next morning the night watchman was found dead directly in front of the mummy-case, his eyes wide open, with a look of mortal terror in them, while his face was rigid and drawn with fear, as if the man had died while looking on something so dreadful that his mind had instantly become crazed even as his overtaxed heart burst from horror.

No reason could be assigned, and after a searching investigation a verdict was reached by the coroner's jury that death was due "to failure of the heart, the unnatural pose in which the dead man was found to be due to his fear at dying, being added to by the darkness and silence in which he was when the attack seized him". This was most unsatisfactory, but no other explanation was forthcoming.

Hardly had we recovered from this shock when, early one afternoon, I was startled to hear the sound of a fall, and rushing into the president's room, I found him lying on the floor, breathing his last.

As I raised his head up from the floor, the dying man gasped out, "Send back the mummy—send him back to—"

Before he could finish the words, he sank back limply. A quickly summoned doctor pronounced his death due to a nervous disorder that had affected the heart.

That ended the stay of the mummy in the museum. Before another day we had it carried to the basement, although it was with difficulty that we could prevail on anyone to go near the now greatly feared body. Arrangements were under way for sending it back to its former resting place when we received a call from Basil G. Stoddard, the representative of an American museum of no small fame. Mr. Stoddard wished to see the cause of the mysterious events, which had by that time been well discussed in the newspapers. He was insistent, and I finally gave in to the extent of allowing him to enter the room where we had locked up the mummy-case. The upshot of it all was that he decided to buy it from us, although we told him every known happening that had been attributed to its baleful influence.

"I do not believe any of the deaths were caused by this dried-up old body," he said. "As for the warning, it was only a natural desire to keep robbers from prying into his tomb that caused him to take such a course. Knowing the superstitious nature of the people, he saw that such a caution would be his best protection. The value to me and to the institution I represent is in the mummy itself and the case, which has certain unusual figures worked into it."

"Well, I shall be glad to be rid of it," I returned. "I do not like to believe that there is anything connecting the deaths and the mummy itself which cannot be explained by psychology of fear, but at any rate we shall all breathe more easily when the thing is no longer under our care."

Just one week later Stoddard sailed for New York. With flags flying bravely, bands playing inspiring music, and hundreds of passengers waving good-bye to their friends on shore, the then largest ship of her class slowly dropped down stream and commenced her maiden voyage. With not a thought of anything but a wonderful journey before them on that floating palace, the passengers began their customary plans for shortening the time and making it most agreeable.

There was but one exception to this. One passenger lay deep in the hold, unmoving, apparently an inanimate,

though rather gruesome, bit of cargo. But who knows but that there radiated from that dead body a terrible malevolence which was destined to bring death and disaster to the gay crowds that thronged the decks above? Who knows but that this malevolent influence—all-powerful because of centuries through which it had existed and grown—perhaps penetrated to the minds of those who guided the destinies of the great ship? That it did not give to the captain of the vessel an all-consuming desire to break the highest records for speed to the American port? And that this desire would render him careless of danger, of reports of drifting icebergs, causing him to drive his ship farther and farther into peril?

Who knows but that this influence (if such there was), vicious, unpitying and ruthless in its desire for vengeance at its violated warning, perhaps swerved each mind to its purpose, even reaching up to the lookout in the crow's nest and making him slow in seeing that vast floating danger which loomed up in the path of the ship carrying those precious souls, until the colossal mass of ice crashed into the oncoming ship, crushing it like a shell and dooming many of those on board to death or separation from loved ones and the others to terrible memories that will live with them forever?

And perhaps as that once proud ship settled below the waves to its final resting place the dead king exulted in fiendish triumph as he went down to rule over the world of dead about him in that greatest of tombs, the steamship *Titanic*.

MEN WHO WALK UPON THE AIR

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, Jr.

AUTHOR OF "DEATH-WATERS" AND "THE OCEAN LEECH"

A gooseflesh story—a tale of walking gibbets, and skeletons, and the old age of François Villon, the vagabond French poet. A startling tale, full of thrills and grisly horror.

In WEIRD TALES For May

On Sale at All News Stands April First

Strange Adventures on a Coral Isle That Slid Into the Ocean One Night

LITTLE ISLAND

By H. THOMPSON RICH

Author of "The Crimson Crucifix"

"BIG JEFF" RAWSON came to Little Island in the blackness of a furious night, when the rotten bark *Cordova,* bound out of San Francisco to Valparaiso with a cargo of lumber, picked up a gale in the South Pacific and flung herself to death on a shelf of volcanic rock. Captain and crew shared the fate of their ship, but Jeff toiled through the surf to shore.

All night he lay on the beach, just above where the waves roared, with the moan of a storm-flogged forest in his ears, mingled with the intermittent crash of heavy thunder; in his eyes, even with the lids down, the livid flare of forked tongues of tropical lightning.

Toward morning he slept, till the incoming tide sent a swift, venomous eddy of spume snapping at his feet. Chilled afresh by the sudden contact, he awoke and crawled painfully a little farther up the sand, and again slept. But again the tide found him, as an unusually high comber dashed itself almost upon him, wetting him thoroughly once more. Shivering with cold he staggered to his feet and ran from the hungry sea, sinking down in sheer exhaustion, far up the beach.

When next he awoke it was night again. His head spun dizzily. The whole island seemed to be swaying, swaying sickeningly. The storm had passed and a bright half-moon hung in the sky, amid a myriad stars. But neither moon nor stars seemed fixed, gyrating grotesquely, describing unaccountable arcs—while a thin, dark line of horizon rose and fell obliquely. Jeff shut his eyes. But still he seemed to feel the swaying. Then he smiled and the island became a dream. He was on board the *Cordova* again. The shipwreck, the desperate battle with the surf, the fever, the thirst, the delirium—it was all a dream. When morning came it would all be right.

But when morning came and a hot sun burned down upon him, he awoke to the grim reality of his plight. He felt the hard sand under him, felt his stiff, aching body, and knew that after all it was somehow strangely real. His face burned and his throat was salt and dry. He must have taken in considerable sea water.

He had no hunger, but his thirst had become intolerable. So he rose unsteadily and set off up the beach to the forest that spread before his dizzy eyes like a vast green curtain, mercifully cool and beckoning irresistibly.

Some two or three hundred yards in he came upon a well-beaten path running through the hip-high undergrowth. Scarcely thinking at the time that this was an almost unmistakable indication of human habitation, he staggered along it till it terminated in an irregular clearing. On the far side a little spring dripped deliciously inviting water into a tiny pool formed of mossy rocks.

JEFF was about to make the few remaining steps and bury his burning face in that God-given pool and drink—drink endlessly—when of a sudden he beheld a sight that caused him to gasp with wonder. The undergrowth parted beyond the spring and a girl emerged, carrying in her arms a large jug of sun-baked clay. She was dressed in a skirt of brown serge, much patched and mended, and a waist of white linen, hand-made. Her hair, which was brown, and hung free, was caught half-way down with a makeshift clasp. Her eyes were purely, deeply blue. Her legs were bare. She appeared to be in her early twenties, a white girl—probably from the States, Jeff surmised as he gazed at her.

How she came to be there did not matter, for the present at least. He must have water, quickly, or die. With this in mind he started forward again, and reaching the pool, fell face forward into it. The water reached his parched throat and he swallowed, swallowed—until again he seemed to be striving in a sea that sought to overwhelm him. Blackness settled down. The ringing in his ears grew fainter. The racking tumult in his head subsided, and a green watery peace came over him. He had drowned, drowned after all, drowned in a pool two feet deep, when he had come safe through a raging surf studded with dagger-sharp rocks. It was the sort of irony that seafaring men come to expect. He smiled.

The girl, observing the smile, was relieved. After all, perhaps he would live. She had lifted his face out of the water and laid him gently down on the green moss by the pool-edge. Kneeling beside him, she loosened his shirt over his chest, so that he might breathe easier. Then, leaving him there, leaving the water-jug she had meant to fill, she raced back along the path she had come.

TEN minutes later she drew up at a clearing several times the size of the one at the pool, in the midst of which was a wooden shack, built out of the odds and ends of some wrecked vessel. At the door stood a slender, dark-haired, sullen youth, awaiting her approach. He had heard her coming.

As she crossed the clearing on a run, she called:

"Quick! Come with me. There's a man down by the pool, half dead of thirst and fever."

Was it a scowl that crossed the boy's handsome, wayward face? At any rate he made no move.

She had now come up to him.

"Well?" she asked, clenching her fists as if she longed to strike him.

A moment more he hesitated, then silently moved off toward the spring, his jaw set. She followed a few steps behind. They left the clearing and turned into the forest.

"I told you a vessel went ashore night before last," she said quietly as they moved along. "We should have circled the beach yesterday, as I suggested."

"If you think I'm going to walk ten miles every time you get a notion there's a ship ashore," he snapped at her without turning around, "you're damned mistaken!"

She blushed.

"You needn't swear, anyway," she remarked.

Then she lapsed silent and they walked along without further words—the boy with his hands deep in his trousers of sailcloth, his head stiffly up; the girl with her bare arms and legs swinging whitely through the green undergrowth, her eyes lowered.

They reached the well, found the man still living, carried him to their shack. There he hovered for many days on that mysterious borderland between life and death, that strange land where day and night, sleeping and waking, space and time, are one.

But through it all there was the saving presence of a bare-legged, bare-armed, blue-eyed girl with a face the gentlest he had ever seen.

So JEFF RAWSON lived.

Then one morning the dreadful veil of delirium passed and he saw the face clearly. The fever had gone. The pain had left him. But the face remained, that sweet, beautiful, almost childish face.

The girl leaned closer.

"How does 'Big Jeff' feel this morning?" she asked, smiling.

He turned over on his side and regarded her steadfastly.

"I feel as if I could eat," he answered simply. "How did you learn my name?"

"Oh, you told me that and much more in your delirium. You were the mate of the *Cordova*, from San Francisco. You were the only one that didn't drown. You can see the wreck at low tide every day, on the rocks at the west shore of Little Island."

"What island?"

"Little Island; that's this island we're on."

"And why do you call it Little Island?"

"Because it's so tiny—only about three miles across and ten miles around."

Jeff hesitated a moment, then asked the question he most wanted to know of all:

"How'd you get here, you and that chap with you?"

A look of remembered pain and terror came into the girl's clear eyes.

"We were wrecked in my father's yacht, seven months ago," she said quietly. "The *Tasmanus*. Perhaps you've heard of it." Then, sadly: "Father and mother and Clarence's brother were drowned. Clarence and I were able to get to the island. Clarence is my cousin."

"And were the crew drowned too?"

"All but the engineer—and he died two months ago. We buried him under a big palm tree. Since then Clarence and I (did Jeff fancy she shuddered?) have been alone. Fortunately there are no savages on the island, and few dangerous animals, so we have been able to get along. But we couldn't save much from the yacht, for it broke up so soon. One of the small boats drifted ashore practically whole, and the engineer helped us fix it. We've got that, but I don't see what good it is going to do us. Mainland must be a hundred miles away, at least. Perhaps we may *have* to use it some day, though," she finished, growing very serious.

There was something in her tone that made Jeff ask what she meant.

"Little Island may not be here always," she replied.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember the night you swam ashore, and the next day and night, while the storm lasted?"

"Not very clearly. I was too dizzy and sick to remember much. The wonder is I did not perish."

The girl smiled a little wanly.

"It wasn't altogether dizziness. That night the storm shook Little Island to its foundations, snapped the coral moorings that hold it to the reef, and lifted it out on to the last shelf of rock. So you see, what you took for dizziness was partially the swaying of the island itself. We are now insecurely wedged between two volcanic mountain tops that show just a bit out of the water. The next storm is very likely to lift us up and out into the deep sea. Then we shall surely sink."

Jeff listened in amazement, and his mind reverted with clarifying vividness to that night when the moon cut arcs across the sky and the horizon heaved and fell like a ship at sea. It was all plain now.

For a while he lay silent, thinking of the extraordinary predicament they were in.

"Have you made any efforts to signal passing ships?" he asked at length.

"Yes," she answered gravely. "We have a distress flag flying from the tallest tree on the island, but not a ship has passed this way since we've been here. You know, it's out of the regular lanes. Ships seem only to come this way when they are blown here by storms. Once we saw smoke on the sky-line, but whatever ship it was must have been too far off to see our signal. Sometime, of course, we'll be rescued, if we can manage to keep alive. But it may be years."

There was a reminiscent look in her eyes as she spoke. She was thinking of the States, of New York and Palm Beach, Rockaway and Newport, the society she had known, her friends, all that old life, so oddly different from this one.

"I suppose most everyone I know will have gotten married by the time I get back," she smiled a little wistfully. "And there'll be all sorts of changes. Just fancy, if we were here for two or three years! All the little girls I left in short dresses would be out—and I'd be a wallflower!"

Jeff laughed at her whimsical mood and chatted with her lightly, trying to brighten her up.

"By the way," he said suddenly, "you haven't told me your name yet."

"It's Janice," she replied.

"And your last name?"

"Hampton."

"Then your father was James Hampton, the manufacturer."

He stated it positively, for he saw now, remembered the name, in connection with the missing *Tasmanus*. James Hampton had been a big man back home. The disappearance of Hampton and his party and yacht had caused quite a flurry, he recalled.

Jeff fell silent. A wall had suddenly risen between them, a wall of position, of wealth. When next he spoke, he called her Miss Hampton.

"You may call me Janice," she said quietly. "I intend to call you Big Jeff."

It was at this moment that Clarence came into the shack. He heard her words, and a dark frown overspread his too handsome young face.

2

As time went on, Clarence came to hate this "intruder" with a cold, murderous hate. He was too much in Janice's company and she showed all too plainly her preference for him. Whenever they were together his eyes followed them. He became convinced they were more than friendly.

Slowly the poison of hate spread through his blood till his veins, his very brain, seethed with it. It was driving him slowly but surely to the point of mania. Then one night he crept after them to the beach, where they had gone to sit in the moonlight—and he saw them in each other's arms. At that, something in his brain snapped. The frenzy to kill took possession of him. Thereafter all his thoughts revolved around that idea.

How thin is the veneer of civilization! Under it, always, in every society, through every stratum of humanity, the primal savage lurks. A thousand years produce a cultured being—and a few months of reversion to primitive conditions strip the culture from him and leave the aboriginal man.

Day by day Clarence went about his work with growing sullenness, planning how to rid himself of the intruder who had taken what he had intended to have for himself. But his strength was puny beside that of Big Jeff. In a hand-to-hand contest he could not possibly hope to win. How then was he to slay?

Scheme after scheme he weighed and rejected. Then, one morning,

quite by accident, he hit upon what is always the weak slayer's way—the surprize attack. Jeff was seated on a high rock overlooking the sea, fishing with improvised tackle. Clarence saw him from afar, and, the idea born full-fledged, circled around two miles and came up behind him noiselessly.

"There are plenty of fish down there!" he snarled—and pushed him off.

Jeff fell the full sixty feet into the boiling surf before he realized what had happened, and Clarence stood looking down with a burning light in his eyes. But fortunately the land gave off abruptly at that point and the water was deep, with no deadly rocks. So presently, to his dismay and terror, Clarence saw the man he had sought to slay rise up and start swimming through the torturous water to shore with mighty strokes. Fascinated with dread of the aftermath, he watched till Jeff had regained safety; then, with fearful fright clutching inside him, he turned and dashed into the forest.

Jeff dried his clothes in the sun, smiling a grim, unpleasant smile. But when he went back to Janice that noon he made no mention of the incident.

That night Clarence did not show up. Janice became alarmed and begged Jeff to go out and make a search. Still noncommittal, Jeff did so. But no trace of Clarence was to be found.

For three days the mystery continued. Janice gave her cousin up for lost and was greatly grieved.

Then, on the fourth morning, purposely lying in wait at the spring, Jeff trapped him as he came to drink.

"You fool!" he cried, snatching him by the arm in a steely grip. "Did you think this island would be big enough to hide you, if I really wanted to catch you? Return to the shack and say nothing. Janice doesn't know."

Clarence stood there shaking in terror, scarcely believing what he heard. He was speechless.

"Go back," reiterated Jeff. "But I warn you, keep clear of me in the future—or I'll break your woman's back with my two hands!"

Clarence shuddered, and with thanksgiving slouched off. Jeff stood gazing after him. A look of pity and disgust slowly came to his hard, tanned face.

3

Big Jeff left Little Island two months later in the blackness of as furious a night as the night he came—when another such gale as had piled the *Tasmanus* and the *Cordova* on the vicious reef swept up out of the south.

The three of them were huddled in the little shack. Outside the wind roared and great sheets of rain whipped through the sky, cut by long, blinding forks of lightning. The thunder, like the cannonading of a great battle, was almost incessant. In the interims, from the forest came the moan of tortured trees. An ominous odor pervaded the air, a salt dankness mingled with something burnt and something very earthy and terrible.

They sat silent, tense, waiting—Clarence in a corner sullen and alone, and Jeff and Janice together. Every instant it seemed as if the fury of the tempest must lift their puny shack from about them and carry it away. Or worse—what they feared— the island itself— . . .

Then it happened. Slowly the earth under them quivered and shook. Then, taking on an irregular swaying motion, it rose and fell sickeningly, with an occasional unsteady lurch.

"You see," whispered Janice, "it is as I told you. Only the reef is holding us. If we are lifted over that last line—"

Even as she spoke the ground heaved up at a grotesque angle and they were all spilled upon the floor of the shack. The lamp fell from its shelf and shattered. They were plunged in dizzy, swaying darkness. But the gigantic roller that had passed under them, under the island, failed to dislodge them, and presently they settled back upon the reef with a dull crash of splintering coral. From the forest came the sound of falling trees knocking against one another.

In the inky blackness there, all three of them realized that the hour they had dreaded was at hand. The lightning flared and the thunder crashed with increased violence. Then, between flashes, there sounded a scramble of feet, followed by the sudden opening and shutting of the door. One of them had gone.

The next lightning flash told which one. Only Jeff and Janice remained.

Clutching his arm, Janice whispered, "Why do you suppose he left?"

"God knows," muttered Jeff, "unless—"

He did not allow himself to finish, and a moment later another giant roller, passing under the island and lifting it dizzyingly up, carrying it breathlessly forward, removed all thought of conjecture from his mind. Then again, after a moment of dead silence, came that splintering, rending crash, as the whole island settled back upon the reef.

JEFF felt for Janice in the darkness and put his arm steadyingly about her.

"We must get out of here," he cried.

"The boat!" breathed Janice, as they made their way to the door. "The little boat down by the beach! Oh, if we can only find Clarence!"

A bitter smile came across Jeff's face, but of course in the dark Janice could not see it, and there was no revealing flash of lightning at that moment.

He grasped Janice more tightly, bent his head, opened the door—and they passed out into that frantic night. Stung and lashed by wind and rain carrying bits of sand and all manner of loose chaff and forest wreckage, they made their way stumblingly forward. A ten minute battle brought them to the beach. Then they paused, Janice aghast, Jeff smiling grimly.

The boat was not there.

"It must have been carried away," she sighed, her last hope vanishing.

But Jeff had seen the human footprints there. He said nothing to Janice, but led her away.

They started back to the shack, to face their fate. But they were destined never to reach there. On the way back along the winding path through the forest, the final chapter in the history of Little Island was written.

They had traversed about one-half the distance—when without warning a titanic roller swept under the island, lifted it high over the outer reef and deposited it upon the tossing breast of the deep Pacific. It floated there a moment, aghast at its own fate. Then, careening loggily, with a majestic calm it proceeded to tilt up on end and slide into the depths, much as some giant liner that has received a torpedo in its entrails.

Jeff and Janice, racing along the narrow little path, paused when they felt under their feet the motion of doom, and stood there. Both were stoical, but Janice could not altogether check the tremor of fear that swept over her.

"Jeff," she sobbed, clutching him tightly, "we're going to die, I suppose. But oh, I don't want to die! I so want to live!—for—for, Jeff. I must tell you something—how very, truly much I love you—and that it has been—everything, all my dreams,

this little time with you here on this tiny island."

She was crying now, softly and brokenly. Jeff felt a sudden panic of terrible tenderness surge through him. Here was the woman his cynical heart had long told him he would never find, in those dead years before the sea had become his Lethe—the *one* woman of all. And he was not to have her, except in death! Again there came to his lips that strange, ironical smile of the seafaring man.

Suddenly the water was about them and they were fighting in a tangle of plants and trees and serpents—hideous things that writhed among them but did not sting, more terrified even than they, instinctively thinking the one primal thought, salvation.

Choking, gasping, stunned, blinded, somehow Jeff managed to keep Janice beside him. And then, as suddenly as it had begun, it ended—and Little Island was no more.

Jeff found himself swimming in a morass of forest riffraff, using only one arm, bearing up the now unconscious Janice with the other. He did not know whether she lived or not, but he clung to her desperately. Once he grasped and hurled from her a huge snake that had crawled upon her to save itself.

Then, when the first ferment of the waters above the sunken island had subsided, he looked about for something to cling to, in that inherent will to fight to the end which is one of the wonders of mankind. And presently his search was rewarded. A giant palm came drifting by. He caught it as it rose on a mountain-high billow and lifted Janice upon it. Swimming beside it, he held her there.

Presently her eyes opened, and Jeff, seeing she lived, was warmed through and through with a mighty happiness. He silently vowed he would play this game with fate till fate sat beaten.

Other trees and pieces of trees came drifting by, and before morning Jeff, by an almost superhuman exertion of his great strength, had managed to interlace four or five of them into a makeshift raft, binding them with ropelike strips of bark, so that, when the sun rose, they rose, insecurely, on the subsided swells of a calming ocean.

And there to the west, well within view, was an oncoming ship.

Huddled close together on their shaky raft, Jeff and Janice looked into each other's eyes. Then they laughed and their lips met. But it was a prayer.

A HALF HOUR later, when they had been picked up and stood upon the deck of the rescuing steamer (it was the *Rochester,* bound for New Orleans) Jeff pointed off across the water toward the direction where Little Island had been. Janice looked.

On the rolling surface of the so-called Pacific rode a small boat, bottom-side up.

Author of "The Phantom Farmhouse," "Out of the Long Ago," etc.

THE bleak March wind rushed pell-mell through the narrow, unpaved roadways of Salem Village. It tore at tradesmen's signboards with a bellow, it rapped with frozen fingers at the dwellings' tight-barred shutters, then fled with a whoop of maniacal laughter past Salem Village Church to scream and howl round the Putnam homestead like a chained wolf straining at his leash.

In an upper room of the strong, weather-stained house a girl woke with an uneasy whimper, and looked into the darkness of her low-ceiled bedroom with round, fearful eyes, listening to the screeching of the midnight wind. A moment she lay thus, then sat bolt upright, her mouth squared in a cry of mortal terror.

"Ann, child, what ails thee?" Goodman Putnam swung back the door of his daughter's chamber and flashed the subdued light of his lanthorn about the room.

"Oh, father," the girl (she was only twelve years old) cried, "the witch-woman, the wicked witch-woman was here!"

"Nonsense, child," her father answered testily. "Thou knowest the witches are in Ipswich jail. How can they plague thee now?"

"Natheless, father," Ann Putnam replied stubbornly, "the witch was here but a moment agone. I saw her come down the chimney astride her broom handle, looking at me with great, red eyes—"

Goodman Putnam drew his flannel bedgown more tightly about his shoulders and looked fearfully at the fireplace his daughter's shaking forefinger indicated. "Didst recognize her, child?" he asked.

"I—I think," the girl stammered, trying to summon her memory, "I think 'twas Goodwife Corey, father."

"Martha Corey, didst say?" Putnam answered thoughtfully.

He laid a poker across the yawning mouth of the fireplace, for witches were notoriously afraid of iron, since that was the metal which bound our Lord to the Tree; and patted his daughter reassuringly on the shoulder.

"Peace, child," he counseled. "Thou'lt be safe till daylight. I'll see the parson about this in the morning."

NEXT day a conference was held in the parsonage of Salem Village Church. The Reverend Samuel Parris, pastor of the congregation, Edward Putnam and Ezekiel Cheever talked earnestly of the state of affairs.

But twelve days ago Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn, both old women of Salem Village, and Tituba, the half-breed Indian slave of Mr. Parris himself, had been remanded to jail as witches, there to await execution on the gallows. Ann Putnam and a number of other young girls and women had been their chief accusers, declaring Goody Good and Goody Osburn had "greviously afflicted" them with pains and torments. With the arrest and imprisonment of the witches, the good citizens of Salem had breathed a sigh of relief, for, though the Devil was mighty, the Lord, aided by the Reverend Samuel Parris and the Salem magistrates, was mightier, and righteousness had triumphed over wickedness. Now, alas! another witch had risen to plague the congregation.

"Didst say 'twas Goodwife Corey?" the minister asked, interest—perhaps something more—in his deep-set eyes.

"Aye," Putnam answered. "Goodwife Corey, the child said, astride her broomstick—"

"This matter needs our service," Mr. Parris interrupted. "My brethren, let us pray; then you must away to Salem Farms to question this wretched woman."

IN Salem Farms, where the town of West Peabody now stands, was the substantial farmhouse of Giles Corey, husbandman. Corey was past his eightieth birthday; but a better man in strength and endurance than many only half his age. Neighbors told wonderingly how he could cut a wider swath with the scythe than any man in the hay field, how he had been known to lift a keg of cider to his mouth and drink from the bunghole as though from a mug, and how a drunken farmhand, relying on the old man's age to render him feeble, had paid for his folly with his life when he made a murderous assault on his employer. The laborer had attacked Corey with a flail, and the old man had defended himself so stoutly with his bare fists that the other subsequently died of the beating he received.

Several of the neighbors had little cause to love Giles Corey. When some of them had wrongfully accused him of burning another's barn he had an action for slander against them, and won substantial damages.

Corey's wife, Martha, was his third spouse, and a fitting mate for him. Though past sixty, she could turn out more work than any woman in the neighborhood, and the uniform perfection of her butter and constantly healthy condition of her chickens and geese were matters for envious conversation among other farmwives. Some there were who hinted darkly that her good luck came not alone from industry and the "know how", but might be attributed to the sort of help no Christian woman dare accept.

Another cause the neighbors had to regard the Coreys askance was their attitude toward the arrests for witchcraft. When residents of the village and farms alike were crying out upon Goody Osburn and Goody Good, the Coreys stood aloof, Martha Corey declaring she would not convict a dog of egg-sucking on the testimony of hysterical children. As for Tituba, the minister's Indian slave, who had confessed herself a witch and implicated Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn with her, Goodwife Corey had hinted the Indian woman's pious master knew more about that confession than he cared to tell.

Ann Putnam, the twelve-year-old girl whose testimony, without cross-examination, had sworn away the

lives of Mrs. Good and Mrs. Osburn, had heard Martha Corey declare she ought to have been soundly spanked—that she was a tale-inventing jade. Now Ann Putnam had told her father it was Martha Corey who entered her bed chamber, astride a witch's broomstick.

On the morning of March 12, 1692, Edward Putnam and Ezekiel Cheever rode into the barnyard of the Corey farmhouse and clamored on the kitchen door with their sword hilts.

"I know why you come," Martha Corey said as she swung the door open and recognized her visitors. "You have come to say I am a witch; but I am none. I am a Gospel woman."

Putnam and Cheever looked knowingly at each other. How came this woman to know their errand before they had opened their lips?

"You have been cried out against," Cheever told her solemnly. "The children of Salem Village say you have appeared unto them—"

"And did they saw how I was dressed?" the old lady interrupted. "Did they tell you what clothes I wore?"

Here was a poser. No one had thought to ask Ann Putnam what clothes the witch wore when she appeared, but certainly she must have worn some. Puritans, even when they sold their souls to the devil and became witches, never appeared in public or private save fully dressed.

Straight back to Salem Village rode Ezekiel Cheever and Edward Putnam to question Ann regarding the witch's dress.

When they arrived they found the Evil One's work had preceded them. Ann Putnam had talked with her friends and playmates—now all were undergoing terrible agonies, crying out they were being cruelly pinched and bitten by some invisible person. Between times they were crawling beneath chairs and tables, sticking out their tongues at fathers and mothers and acting generally as no well-behaved Puritan children ever acted when not under the spell of some powerful witch or wizard.

"What clothes wore the witch when she appeared last night?" Putnam asked the daughter.

"She—she—" the girl strove to recall, then fell to sobbing bitterly. "I cannot tell," she wailed. "She was all wrapped round with a blaze of hell-fire; I could not see her clothes."

No one asked Ann Putnam how she knew the blaze to be that of hell-fire, or how such fire differed from that commonly seen on the chimney hearth. The wicked witch's scheme was exposed. She had asked if the child could describe her clothes when she well knew her enveloping sheet of hell-fire prevented her clothing from being seen.

A warrant was forthwith issued for the arrest of Martha Corey, housewife, of Salem Farms.

The Pitmans had not perfected their shorthand system in 1692, and all court reporting which has come down to us from that time consists of abbreviated longhand notes; but the Reverend Samuel Parris, pastor of Salem Village Church, apparently added the duties of court reporter to those of assistant magistrate and prosecutor, since we have the following transcript of Martha Corey's examination preserved in his handwriting:

By Magistrate John Hathorn: *Question.* You are now in the hands of authority. Tell me, now, why do you hurt these children?

Answer. I do not.

Q. Who doth?

A. Pray give me leave to go and pray. (This request was repeated several times.)

Q. We did not send for you to pray, but to tell why you hurt these children.

A. I am an innocent person. I never had to do with witchcraft since I was born. I am a Gospel woman.

Q. How could you tell, then, that the child was bid to observe what clothes you wore when someone came to speak with you?

A. I suspected it.

Q. You dare thus to lie in all this assembly? I expect the truth. Speak, now, and tell who told you what clothes?

A. Nobody.

At this point one of the afflicted children suddenly cried out, "Look, look! There stands a great black man beside her. He is whispering in her ear!" (Mr. Parris records this incident, but fails to give the name of the "afflicted" in his notes.)

Magistrate Hathorn immediately asked the old lady what her invisible counselor said, and she replied: "We must not believe all these distracted children say." Thereupon, to quote Mr. Parris' notes, "there was extreme agony among all the afflicted."

"It was noted that when she bit her lip [again quoting the reverend scribe's report] several of the afflicted were bitten.

"The Marshal said, 'She hath bit her lip,' and immediately the afflicted were in uproar."

In such circumstances, it is not surprizing that Hathorn and Corwin, the magistrates, should have found sufficient grounds for holding the old lady for the autumn assizes. She was accordingly lodged in jail till the court should convene in September.

Her trial, at the fall term of court, presents little difference from similar hearings, save for one single incident. Among the "afflicted" was a young matron, a Mrs. Pope, wife of a well-to-do citizen of Salem. During the trial this Christian young woman hurled her muff at the accused as she stood in the prison's dock. Her shot, as is often the way when women throw missiles, went wild; but if she lacked accuracy of aim she certainly was not wanting in spirit. Stooping, she unfastened the buckle of her heavy, rough-weather brogan and flung it with all her might at Martha Corey. Practise had improved her marksmanship. The iron-studded heel of the heavy footgear struck the old lady full in the mouth. Tipstaves and court attendants made no move to interfere. With bruised and swollen lips Martha Corey stood to receive sentence of death by hanging.

Another entry in the Reverend Mr. Parris' notes furnishes us with the penultimate chapter of Martha Corey's tragedy: "Accordingly, this 14 September, the 3 aforesaid brethren [Lieutenant Nathaniel Putnam and two deacons of Salem Village Church] went with the pastor to her in Salem Prison; whom we found very obdurate, justifying herself, and condemning all that had done anything to her discovery or condemnation. Whereupon, after a little discourse (for her imperiousness would not suffer much), and after prayer, the dreadful sentence of excommunication was pronounced against her."

Six days after Martha Corey's arrest on a charge of witchcraft, her husband, Giles Corey, was haled before the magistrates on a similar accusation.

The same "afflicted children" who had sworn away the wife's life appeared in the rôle of prosecuting witnesses against the husband, and so greatly did they suffer that, though the old man stood a good ten yards from them, his hands were lashed behind his back to keep him from pinching the girls by magic.

After the children's tale of hauntings, pinchings, beatings and other

abuses had been told, Giles Corey was permitted to speak in his own behalf. But when he declared himself innocent the "afflicted children" forthwith fell to the floor, some in a dead faint, others writhing and groaning in agony.

"Is it not enough to work magic at other times?" Magistrate Hathorn asked the prisoner sternly as he beheld the sufferings of the "afflicted." "Must you be at it in the face of authority?"

Again the old man denied his guilt and the magistrate interrupted with: "Why do you tell such un-Christian lies against these witnesses?"

Throughout the short hearing of Giles Corey's case the "afflicted" seemed almost beside themselves. If he held his head on one side, the better to hear the judges' words, the heads of the "afflicted" were all held on one side while they cried aloud that his magic compelled them to imitate his movements. He drew in his cheeks, their cheeks instantly were drawn in.

There was little testimony in his case. The cries and general demeanor of the childish accusers were enough to convince the magistrates they had a dangerous and powerful servant of Satan in custody. He was remanded to jail to await the grand jury's action.

September 7, 1692, Giles Corey was led into court to answer an indictment for witchcraft. The court clerk read the document and, as was customary, asked the defendant whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty.

Corey, though past the allotted three score and ten years, was strong in spirit. " 'Tis nonsense!" he cried in a clear, ringing voice. "To peril a man's life on the idle tales of children is foolery. I'll not answer to such an indictment!"

Court and spectators sat aghast. Had not the witnesses on whose testimony Giles Corey was indicted been sworn on the Holy Scriptures? Did not those same Scriptures declare witches and wizards existed and must be put to death? Whoever called a trial for witchcraft foolery denied the Bible and mocked at God. This man was a blasphemer as well as a wizard.

What to do? No man could be legally sentenced unless he had previously been found guilty by a jury after a plea of not guilty or had saved the court's time by pleading guilty. The court took counsel upon the case, then decided to apply the terrible penalty of *peine forte et dure*. This was literally "applying pressure" to the accused, since it consisted of laying him on his back and piling upon his chest and abdomen as great a weight of timber, stone or iron as he could bear, and more, till he either died or agreed to answer "guilty" or "not guilty" to the indictment charging him with crime.*

The English law differed from that of continental European nations in that it strictly forbade torture of accused or witnesses to make them testify. But an ancient statute, dating to the reign of Henry IV, permitted this form of torture for those who delayed justice by refusing to answer an indictment. It mattered not that the accused's conviction was a foregone conclusion—he must have his day in court, and judge and jury would—must, indeed—go through

*NOTE—*While the terrible penalty of* peine forte et dure *was inflicted only once by a court in America, it was by no means unknown in England. Juliana Quick died by it in 1442; Anthony Arrowsmith suffered a like fate in 1598, as did Walter Calverly in 1605 and Major Strangways in 1657. A similar case is recorded at the Cambridge assizes as late as 1741 (though the victim is unnamed). The punishment was abrogated by Act of Parliament in 1772.*

the motions of according him a fair trial before sentence could be legally pronounced and executed.

On Monday, September 19, 1692, Giles Corey was taken to a spot near what was later to be the site of the Howard Street burial ground and Brown Street, Salem, laid on his back, and buried under a great pile of timber and rocks.

Puritan conscience battled Puritan conscience. The firmness of purpose which led the conscientious officers, blinded by the crude superstition they mistook for religion, to torture aged Giles Corey was the same firmness of purpose which made the old man refuse to go through the farce of a trial for a crime he knew to be impossible. It was the same uncompromising spirit which had already wrested a new world from red-skinned men of the woods and would later hold it against red-coated men of the king. Giles Corey suffered for being ahead of his time. He denied the existence of witchcraft in a day when nearly every one firmly believed in a personal devil with horns, hoofs and tail.

When the process of applying pressure commenced, Corey begged the officers to pile as much weight on as possible, "that his sufferings might the sooner be ended."

Robert Calef, a liberal-minded merchant of Salem, who did all in his power to stem the rising tide of madness during the witchcraft prosecutions, relates a horrifying incident of Giles Corey's death:

"In pressing, his tongue being pressed out of his mouth, the sheriff with his cane forced it back again while he was dying."

MARTHA COREY was hanged on Gallows Hill, Salem, September 22, 1692, three days after her aged husband suffered the cruelest death ever imposed by civilized men on the North American continent.

An old ballad, written in the contemporary style, tells of Giles Corey's death in these quaint words:

Giles Corey was a Wizzard strong,
  A stubborn Wretch was he.
And fitt was he to hang on high
  Upon ye Locust Tree.

So when before ye Magistrates
  For Trial he did come,
He would no true confession make,
  But was compleatlie dumbe.

"Giles Corey," sayeth ye Magistrate,
  "What hast thou here to plead
To these that now accuse thy Soule
  Of crimes and horrid Deed?"

Giles Corey—he sayeth not a Worde,
  No single Worde spake he;
"Giles Corey," sayeth ye Magistrate,
  "We'll press it out of thee."

They got them then a heavie Beam,
  They laid it on his Breast;
They loaded it with heavy Stones,
  And hard upon him prest.

"More Weight," now sayed this wretched Man,
  "More Weight," again he cryed,
And he would no confession make,
  But wickedly he dyed.

The third of Seabury Quinn's true tales of witchcraft, "Rebecca Nurse, Saint of Salem," tells how a Colonial court, in violation of the principle of trial by jury, sent a saintly old woman to the gallows on the testimony of hysterical children. It will appear in WEIRD TALES next month.

His Spirit Could Not Be Happy Until He Restored Happiness to the One He Loved

The Dark Interval

By J. B. POWELL

HARGROVE thought: "Pray—pray—why don't I pray? Can't—never learned. Well, what's the difference? Why don't I get frightened? Whisky—it's got me now. I've been a fool. Anne—Anne—where is Anne? The will—Anne—Anne—"

The man was dying. At first he had thought the attack was simply another spell with his heart. He had gotten up out of bed and poured himself a whisky and soda, as was his habit when he had these sudden heart pains. He had then returned to bed to await relief and finally sleep. But the stimulant had failed, and as time went on he felt his fat body grow limp and weak. The sharp pains crept nearer to his heart, and his brain felt numb and tired.

He had checked an impulse to ring for a servant. He knew he was dying, beyond aid. And he wanted no hysterical old man tottering about the room and wringing his useless hands. He had thought it strange that one should feel the approach of death so definitely, and so calmly. He had sometimes wondered just what the sensation would be like. He had wondered if those who lead so-called blameless lives would die more easily than men of his own type. He decided not. Funny, no regrets, no fright, no desire to hang on to life. Strange, too, that one could face the unknown so fearlessly when the time came. Well, he had gotten more out of life than most people. He had lived!

Death was a promise, he had thought—a promise of release, of rest; but only a promise. He had tried to turn this last thought over in his mind, but he felt his senses blurring, and his thoughts became vague and disconnected.

And then, "Anne—Anne—."

He tried to call but the words froze on his cold lips. John Hargrove was dead.

2

"WILL you be goin' in right away, ma'am?"

"Please, Mary."

"I kinda looked for you yisterdee, but I guess you was so fur away an' everythin'."

"Yes, Mary."

"They put him in the big room. I thought it would be best with all his friends an' all. I bin keepin' the door locked agin his relations and such. They come yisterdee. I wanted to wait till you got here, ma'am. He's bin in there two days now."

The servant unlocked a pair of large oak doors, and the two women stepped into the darkened room.

"Them candles are a-burnin' low agin. I bin keepin' 'em lit but seems like they burn down mighty quick. He's over here by the grate, ma'am."

The women stopped suddenly and peered down into the black coffin.

"Looks natchurl, don't he, ma'am?"

"Did he suffer, Mary?"

"Went too quick to suffer, ma'am. Died in bed. Heart trouble takes 'em that way. Liquor, the doctors said. Guess he drank purty much after you went, ma'am."

Neither spoke for some minutes. The figure in the coffin fascinated them. Their eyes remained fixed upon the massive face, a face which might have been molded out of soft putty. The small eyes were closed, but the heavy jowl drew them downward and revealed slits of pale blue. The wide chin was creased twice, and seemed to roll down below the stiff white collar.

The servant broke the silence. "Perhaps I better git you a bite to eat, ma'am. A warm cup o' tea would do you good."

"No, Mary. Just take my things up. I'll be out presently."

The doors swung silently shut behind the servant. The woman who remained gazed quietly down upon her husband. Only one candle now remained lighted. It cast a pale yellow light into the face of the dead man. At length the woman lifted her eyes and glanced about her. The large room was dark and still. She could just discern the outlines of familiar objects. A chair, a table, a picture. She lowered her eyes once more and studied the expressionless face below her.

She thought: "Death is stronger than love. Death has made him meek and still. Love only gave him the power to hurt, to crush. I don't hate him any more; I simply pity him."

The lone candle sputtered and went out. The white face in the coffin was the only object that could be seen in the black room. Mrs. Hargrove did not move. She continued to watch the face, still thinking.

"Anne—Anne."

Mrs. Hargrove whirled about. The voice came from behind. She had heard no one enter. The room was dark.

"Anne—Anne—the will—Anne!"

It was a man's voice, deep and solemn. It sounded like her husband's voice. She turned back to the coffin.

"Anne—Anne—"

No, it came from behind, but it was John's voice.

"Yes, John," she said softly.

A shaft of light crossed the room.

"Are you all right ma'am? I thought mebbe you took sick bein' in here so long."

The servant switched the lights on as she talked.

"Yes, Mary, I'm quite all right," replied Mrs. Hargrove calmly.

3

It seemed to Hargrove that he had been asleep an unusually long time. The sun was already streaming through the open windows as he leisurely rose from his bed. Ten o'clock, at least, he thought. He turned mechanically toward the small table that contained his whisky siphon and he moved slowly toward it. He reached for a glass, but his hand seemed unable to close upon it. In fact, he thought his hand went right through it as if it were a shadow. Somewhat dismayed, he turned and walked back to his bed. He decided that he was very sleepy, or perhaps still under the influence. He sat down on the edge of the bed and thoughtfully placed his head in his two hands. Finally he stood up again, convinced that he was neither asleep nor drunk. He glanced down at the foot of the bed for his bathrobe. He would bathe and get dressed. Then he would feel better. His eyes fell upon the fat figure stretched out beside him and he remembered then that it was dead.

With the realization of death came intense misery. Hargrove had never

felt its equal in life. It was not physical discomfort, nor was it quite mental agony. It was worse than either of them, but not so tangible. Comparing the feeling to life, it was, he thought, as if he had murdered everyone in the world and was consequently forced to live alone. Alone, he thought, with a strict, puritan conscience for company. He felt utterly abandoned, and he was all misery. In life he might have thrown off even so intense a suffering by drink or by any form of material pleasure. But in his present state he was helpless.

This persistent spiritual aching soon drove him into panic. He felt he must go somewhere, talk to someone, anyone. He wondered if he must remain in the bedroom with his useless body, and soon found that he could move through solid objects, but that he could not leave the floor. He realized that he was invisible because no part of his being was visible to himself. He thought it strange that he could walk, although he seemed to drift along rather than take actual steps.

But such misery! And every pang said, "Anne, Anne." It was as if Anne herself were prodding his wounded soul, persecuting him with pain. He tried to think of other things, of pleasant things, but the voice said, "Anne," with added distress, with unbearable wretchedness.

Deciding that he could bear it no longer, Hargrove left the bedroom and went downstairs. The servants were in the kitchen eating breakfast. Undoubtedly they had not yet discovered his body, and they knew better than to disturb him before noon. He decided not to bother them. He would walk out and try to find relief from this insufferable agony.

He left the house and drifted aimlessly along familiar streets. He encountered several acquaintances, stopped and bade them good morning, but they passed through him, unperturbed. He shouted after them, but they paid him no heed. His misery increased. He could not understand, if his present state were death, why life was so near at hand. And since life was so close why could he not reach out and grasp it? He wondered if he must go on thus eternally. Where was the promise death had pledged him?

Drifting—drifting. He who had been so completely material now so entirely spiritual. Thoughts. He could do nothing but think. Think back on Anne. Think back with a pang of remorse over each sordid detail of his life with her. He who had been so unutterably unfeeling, so thoroughly selfish. Think back, always back. No future, no ray of hope, no merciful rest. He must continue drifting, always drifting—drifting.

He lived again his lurid years with his wife. He saw her, young, attractive, an orphan depending on the world of men for her livelihood. She had been his secretary, and he had wanted her. And because she was honest he had married her. But although she did become his wife she was simply another woman in his life. That she had loved him mattered not. It was the same old hackneyed story of the man grown tired of the woman and the woman dying a little from each rebuke—dying that slow, creeping death which only a woman who loves knows.

And when finally she left him he had thought it a great joke. He had hastened to his lawyer's so that he might exclude her from any share of his worldly goods in case he died first. She had worked before; she could work now, and continue to work until she cursed the day she left him. Just the same old trite story. Beauty and the Beast. That same old bromide, worked to death,

a drug on the market. Beauty and the Beast.

Hargrove lost track of all time in his suffering. How long he had drifted thus musing he knew not. At night he returned to his house through habit, and spent the long night pacing the rooms. He would wander into the drawing room at times and stand before his coffin, vainly yearning that he might crawl back into his dead body and breathe again. Then he would enter the bedrooms where his relatives were quartered, seeking comfort there. He could hear them laughingly discussing his death. How much would they get? Already they were eager. Planning to have the will read immediately after his funeral. Yes, they would get it. His dear relatives. Every penny of it. His sweet relatives!

And then back into the drawing room again to pace the deep carpet by his coffin until Anne came. He felt satisfied that she would come. Death has strange drawing powers. It draws forgotten wives back to forgetting husbands.

He was not startled when he heard the key turn in the lock and saw the doors swing open. Of course it would be Anne. He swooped forward to meet her and called her name frantically. He called again—again. No response. The servant. Would she never go? Again—again. Ah, the servant was going now—gone. Again. She heard him. answered him. Tell her, tell her something. What? The will: yes. the will. The servant again. Both going now. Both gone.

He followed his wife to her room and called to her all night in vain.

4

It was a coincidence that John Hargrove's will was to be read in the same room from which he had been buried. He thought of this as he watched his eager cousins file in and choose their seats. He noticed the anxious greed in their faces and cursed himself. His wife, dry-eyed and calm, sat apart from the group quietly conversing with the attorney. The large room was no longer dark and somber. Cheerful flames shot from the log fireplace, and the late October sun flooded the room with brightness. The flowers which had yesterday graced his coffin had been removed. Even the gorgeous candelabrum had been hidden from sight.

Hargrove marveled at the change death had worked in his heart. He wished Anne could know him now. He wished she might feel the deep love in his heart and know the gentle thoughtfulness that had enveloped him. Too late. All things come too late. He felt that he could atone for every wrong he had ever done her, now. Yes—now.

His intense misery had given way to more quiet pain. He felt that he was soon to die another death. The small leather case which the lawyer so carelessly tossed upon the table held poverty for Anne, and eternal suffering for him. It held a scrap of paper with the ravings of a madman scribbled on it. yet with the power to destroy two lives—a living one and a dead one.

A sense of rebellion surged through him when the lawyer quietly opened his brief case and extracted the document. He paced the floor frantically. The paper must not be read.

"No, no!" he shouted.

The attorney had already begun.

"I, John Hargrove, being of good health and sound mind do hereby—"

Hargrove swooped forward and flung himself desperately upon the man. The paper slid gracefully from his hands and fluttered slowly down into the fireplace. An over-anxious cousin brought out a single charred edge and a burned hand for his pains.

All eyes were riveted upon the lawyer. Hargrove's relatives were trying to digest what had just happened. A fortune had been burned before their very eyes.

The attorney smiled not sadly.

"The accident was unfortunate," he said blandly. "According to the law of this state regarding lost and destroyed wills, the entire property, both real and personal, descends to John Hargrove's wife, Mrs. Anne Hargrove."

With the attorney's last words Hargrove felt himself lifted up out of the open window. He felt cool breezes play about him. The odor of fresh green fields came to him. Warm, friendly hands touched him. He heard soft, soothing music in the distance. His heart was light and his soul was finally at rest.

The Wolves Were Howling at the Door, but Far Off Across the Snow-Covered Steppes the old Russian Peasant Heard the Tinkling of

SLEIGH BELLS

By HASAN VOKINE

IT WAS cold in the fierce, heartless way of Siberia. A desert of snow stretched on every side beyond a lonely little *muzhik* hut. Within, covered by a sheepskin, lay Andrey Taranof. His son, kneeling at his side, listened anxiously to his heart beats.

For many days they had endured the cold with even no food, and now the father was about to cross the border. Painfully he spoke: "Dmitri—good-bye."

The son was unable to answer. He kissed his father and arose. Moving from the pile of straw he slid aside a block of wood, and exposed a small hole in the door. The moon shone down on a silver carpet, crossed and recrossed by the sinister shadows of wolves. He studied the glistening fur which covered their lithe bodies, beautiful despite the shudder they caused.

They seldom congregated in such numbers around a solitary hut save when a man was dead or dying. What strange thing told them of Andrey's condition? Now a long, restless howl made his hand tremble as he replaced the shutter. Turning, he said in a low voice, "Father, let me open the door. You see that we shall die in the end. It would be better than this long waiting."

There was no answer.

His hand rested on the bolt. It turned!

"Dmitri! Wait."

The careworn eyes of the dying man had opened. He was alert.

"Dmitri, don't I hear bells, *droshky* bells? Yes! They come from the west, nearer and nearer."

The son shrugged his shoulders.

"But it could not be, father. No one would come—for us."

"But listen! Ah, don't you hear them?"

Dmitri put his ear to the door. The snow crunched under a hairy paw. That was all.

Still they waited. Dmitri dreamed, as he leaned against the wall, that the cold which crept slowly up his boots from the dirt floor was a pack of wolves, gnawing, gnawing at him, and he drew his long *cherkeska* more tightly about him.

THE sun arose, and each beam chased away another wolf. Soon the whole world was glorious and golden, save for the two within the hut. The squalor of their existence was almost unbelievable. Although only exiles, their lot had been worse than that of some Saghalien prisoners. Forced to live in a miserable, one-room hut, or *izba*, not allowed even so much as an implement with which to eat their coarse food there, life was that of beasts.

"Now we must wait another long day—to die," said Dmitri.

"No, no! I cannot be mistaken," insisted the father, slowly and painfully. "I still hear the bells. They were very far off—and now they are nearer.

Dmitri looked at his father and wondered how much longer he would last—surely not until night. When that time came, when the pack had once more collected without the hut, he would tear open the door. In a minute the room would be surging with their cruel, glossy bodies, and in another minute he would have joined his father.

Again he resolved himself to waiting. Late in the afternoon Andrey motioned for water, and his son fed him from a bowl a dirty mess, half water, half snow, which had filtered through the cracks. Darkness came early, and soon the occasional howls of the wolves were heard. A crunch of the hard upper snow some time later told him that one was just without. He carefully sounded the door. The snow was above his waist, which meant that once the door was opened it would be impossible to shut. He prayed that his father would not last much longer, and again he was startled at the old man's strength. Andrey was sitting up! His lips formed the word, "Listen!"

Another howl sounded. Then faintly, from far away, the tinkling of a speeding sleigh reached them.

Dmitri could not believe. He held his ears. It stopped. He released them, and again the tinkling came. It was steadily becoming louder.

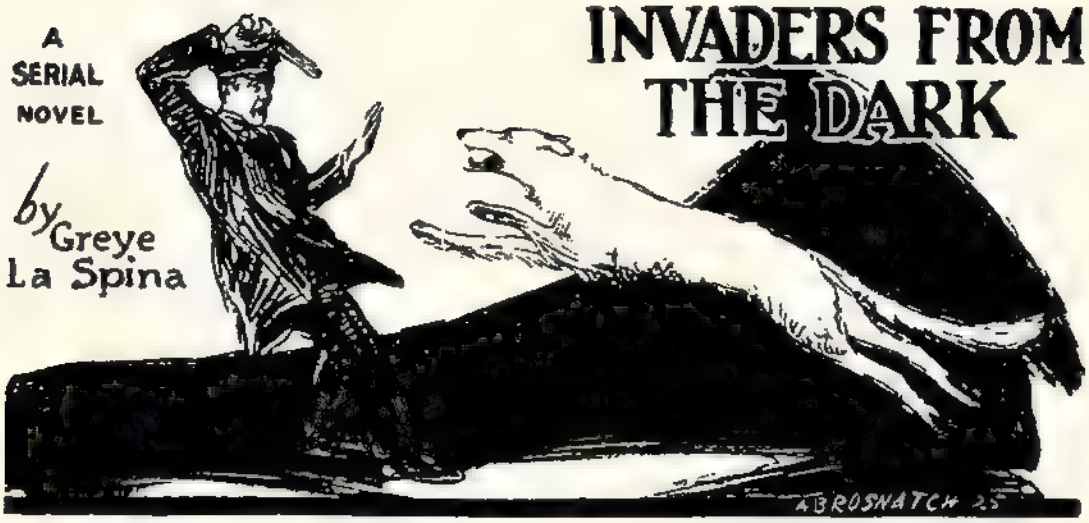
It was just too much. In his exhausted condition such an emotion was more than Dmitri could withstand.

LATER, as they were taken into a room where there stood a table with a samovar, a big bowl of steaming *schi* and plenty of vodka, Dmitri told his rescuer of how his father had first heard his sleigh bells.

"But," said the farmer, "it must have been about the time I was starting out, miles from you."

So to this day they wonder how that old man, on the point of death, knew.

This is a superstitious story, typical of the Russian peasant. The son's story was taken as an omen that Andrey had been forgiven by the Great Father as well as by their "Little Father" the tsar. Had he not been allowed to visit the misty world of after death? How else had he heard brother Vasili's sleigh bells?



Author of "The Tortoise-Shell Cat," "The Remorse of Professor Panebianco," etc.

FOREWORD

SOME time during the latter part of May, 1924, I received a communication from a well-known publishing house, a communication sufficiently out of the ordinary to merit my immediate attention. I had sold these publishers considerable fiction treating of the occult and supernatural; they wrote me to inquire if I were an actual student of the occult, or if I had merely gone into the subject superficially to give more color to my stories. They intimated that there was a special reason back of their inquiry.

I wrote back that I was a serious student of the occult, but that the more I studied it the more I found to learn and the more I realized that I had only scratched the surface of the subject. The publishers wrote back that they had been requested to get in touch with a student of the occult and to ask such a person to communicate immediately with Miss Sophie Delorme, Differdale House, Meadowlawn, Lynbrook. (It is understood, of course, that I am using the fictitious names furnished in the manuscript written by Miss Delorme.)

I was naturally interested and wrote to Miss Delorme at once. The lady informed me that she had a manuscript of about fifty thousand words which she had written to explain an extremely strange matter that had occurred in her neighborhood. She believed this story to be vitally important and insisted that she dared not entrust the manuscript to any other than a person instructed along occult lines, as she had every reason to believe that efforts would be made to reach and destroy the papers before their message could be transmitted to the world. She asked me to call on her and take over the manuscript personally, and see to it that it was printed.

I ascertained that Miss Delorme was a responsible person, quite able and willing to defray the costs of printing her book, in case it proved to be out of the line of the regular publishing houses. I arranged to visit her home on June 18th, an easy matter, as I found I could get there by subway. On June 18th, therefore, I walked across the fields to the great wall which she had described in her letters, and rang the bell of the bronze gate. From that moment, I began to

realize what Miss Delorme meant when she wrote that she feared for the safety of her manuscript.

Even as I stood there waiting, things started to happen in a most bewildering fashion. I heard somebody throw up a window on a side of the house (to my right), and then there came a woman's scream, which sounded to me more angry than fearful. The scream was followed by a heavy, metallic clang upon the pavement just around the corner from where I stood. I left the gate and ran in the direction of the noise.

On the sidewalk lay a black tin box such as is often used to preserve papers of importance. It was dented badly where it had struck the pavement. I picked it up and then turned my eyes toward the windows above me.

An elderly woman stood at the open window nearest the corner of the house, holding with both hands to the window-frame at either side of her. Although she appeared to be alone, I received a strong impression that she was being pulled from behind, for she was struggling as if with all her power to maintain her position there. As I looked up, the tin box in my hand, she called to me anxiously.

"Who are you?"

I told her.

"Thank God you came in time!" she cried excitedly. "Take the box and get away from here as quickly as you can. Don't let it out of your sight until it has been printed and the books distributed. You'll understand why, when you've read it. Never mind about me! My work is done!"

As the last words were flung down at me, she disappeared backward into the room, as if pulled there by invisible hands.

I did not doubt for a moment that I had been talking with Miss Sophie Delorme, and I saw no immediate reason for lingering in the vicinity. She spoke with a forcefulness that made a strong impression upon me. I felt intuitively that it was of infinite importance for me to leave that spot at once with the tin box and its precious contents. As for Miss Delorme, even if she needed assistance of some kind, I should hardly be able to clamber over that high wall; common sense urged me to call for other help, if it proved necessary.

I hugged the box tightly in my arms and ran away just as fast as I could go, forgetting dignity in my anxiety to carry out the other woman's wishes. Even had I known what was to happen, I doubt if I should have lingered; there are some things in the world of more importance even than a human life, and when one recognizes this fact, one acts upon the knowledge when necessary. I know now that I did well to save the manuscript and to carry out Miss Delorme's desire for its publication. It was well that I stood not upon the order of my going, for hardly had I reached the boulevard when a loud and terrible explosion rent the air.

I was flung upon the ground by the force of the concussion, still holding (oh, do not doubt it!) that black box in my arms. When I rose to my feet, dismayed by my premonitions, and turned to look, the Differdale residence with its high surrounding wall no longer marked the spot. A black and smoking mass bulked hugely in its place. Apparently Miss Delorme had not been far wrong when she had warned me that other than human powers would make their attempts to ruin the papers she had entrusted to me; I felt that something had, in a fury of disappointment, brought about her death and the ruin of that splendid and strange house, and that this same something would presently be upon my track.

The thought was more than sufficient for me. I rushed down into the subway and caught the next train

back to town. Not that this ended the matter. Oh, no! Nor had I imagined that it would. I knew that while the devoted Sophie Delorme's valiant and successful effort to place it in my hands had succeeded, even at the cost of her life, the attempts to destroy it would not cease until they had become futile; that is, until there were enough replicas of the manuscript spread broadcast to make it impossible to suppress the message entirely.

Things became quite too lively from that moment on. I had little time to do more than admire the courage and fidelity of the woman who had undoubtedly perished in the Differdale house, before I was myself involved in one accident after another. The motorman on the train I caught had a fainting spell and the train ran wild, smashed into the one ahead and broke things up pretty badly. I escaped with the tin box still in my arms, but scratched and cut by flying glass.

I got out at the next station, having walked the subway rails with other passengers, and took a taxi which proceeded to have a blowout and skid into a telegraph post. The driver was thrown out and injured severely, but I escaped—with a broken arm. My good arm still held the tin box. When the ambulance came for the driver, I made them take me to my own home. My doctor could not understand why I insisted upon hiding that tin box under the bedcovers, where I could hold on to it. He put my broken arm into a cast, and I had to resign myself to some weeks of inactivity.

I went over the manuscript at the first opportunity, with burning curiosity. I had to have the lock of the box broken open. It was done in my presence, of course, but in spite of my repeated warnings, the man who opened it let his tool slip and drove a hole through some of the sheets, making several words indecipherable. Fortunately, the damage was not great.

Meantime, I negotiated with several publishers for the printing of the manuscript. When I found a publisher, my next difficulty arose. How was I to safeguard it until it was in book form? I explained this to the head of the publishing concern, who provided two watchmen who never for a single instant let the manuscript out of their sight during the day, and at night it was locked into a safe in the presence of two people. Notwithstanding these precautions, things happened. I have never spent such a harrowing, nerve-racking time in my life as I spent last July and August, 1924.

In spite of the care with which the manuscript was watched, a lighted match was dropped upon some of it, and it was saved in the very nick of time. That caused a suggestion that it be typed in duplicate, which was done. During the typing, the young woman typist—whose probity is unquestionable, for she is a personal friend of mine, interested also in occult subjects—crumpled up quite a bunch of sheets given her to work from and threw them into the wastebasket, by mistake. Fortunately the loss was discovered before too late, and the pages retrieved. The typist cried, she felt so badly about it, and begged that I take charge of the manuscript sheets myself. I dictated it to her, after that, so that the papers did not leave my hands until safely typed.

One copy of these typed pages was shut up in the publisher's safe with the original manuscript; the other was distributed in the printing room. A fire broke out in the printing room while the men were out at lunch, and the fire engines came, and the place was drenched, the sheets being almost ruined. Fortunately, we could replace spoiled sheets with clean ones from the other copy in the safe.

Then, after the books were printed, the entire printing plant was dynamited, and the books destroyed in the resulting fire. I had taken the proof-sheets home with me, however, and from these I dictated the entire manuscript again to a typist.

I know there are plenty of people who will sneer at the recital of these *accidents*, calling them coincidences. That word covers a multitude of strange, inexplicable happenings. I know too much about those powers who are averse to publishing broadcast the message contained in Miss Delorme's manuscript, to call these occurrences coincidences.

As I write this, I know that Miss Delorme's message of warning will go out into the world as she intended, a message for those who can understand. It may be only a piece of fiction for those who are ignorant of what the most casual students of psychic phenomena now consider everyday occurrences. The declaration that there "ain't no ghosts" today is nothing but a display of the speaker's deplorable backwardness in *current news*, alone.

I wish to state, before closing my little foreword, that I have not touched Miss Delorme's manuscript, except to try to separate it into parts, not chapters. It was a single long narrative, as it came to my hands: the writer evidently considered it more important to get her message on paper than to divide and subdivide it in the manner of modern letters. I found it awkward to draw any dividing lines in the text, myself.

There is little doubt in my mind that that fine and noble woman lost her life because she was not sufficiently instructed in psychic phenomena to protect herself against invasions from the darkness on the other side of the veil that separates the human entity from the mysterious and too often malevolent entities of the astral plane. Fortunately for the world—at least for that portion of the world that can understand—she had secured with careful foresight the printing and distribution of her weird and terrible experience, even to the final detail of a large check made out to me, and enclosed with the manuscript in the tin box. That she was safeguarded until her work was finished and passed on to me, is proof that other and higher powers of good watched over her while her presence on this plane was necessary.

It is my earnest hope that her sacrifice and devotion will not have been in vain. —Greye La Spina.

PART 1

THERE is no real reason for the inside history of that summer to remain unrecorded and there are strong reasons why it should be made public. I understand fully that many will pronounce the whole affair one of sheer fabrication on my part, but on the other hand there are those in America, in the world, who will know that my story is not only possible but probable. It is for these last I write, that the knowledge of those strange happenings may put them on their guard; that they may realize the full extent of the danger in this terrible invasion of our dear country by the potent influences of evil that have for centuries flourished in the wild spots of Europe and Asia.

The world ought to know that these forces of the dark are organizing for the advancement of their own individual and collective purposes, just as the forces of the light are co-operating for the advancement of humanity; that invasions from the dark will periodically be made—slyly, subtly, whenever opportunity offers; that embodied and disembodied evil is marching upon the New World, intent on conquest. And most terrible of all, the New World is ignorant of these potent influences upon mind and body, at-

tributing the ancient wisdom of the Old World along these lines to the superstitious tales of ignorant peasants.

I know from my own experience that these entities are not figments of the fevered imagination. I know that they have arrayed themselves against those who know them and would give them battle. I myself am in deadly peril of their bitter enmity, and one thought only can uphold and strengthen me: God is more powerful than all the combined forces of evil, and while I have a message to give the world, no harm can come to me. When that message has been delivered, my work shall have been finished, and I shall be ready to go, to take up the good fight on another plane of existence.

If I were to relate the whole story in a few terse lines, I am sure that I would be marked down at once as mentally unbalanced and thus my effort to gain the ear of *those who can understand* would have failed. I must not shear the tale, then, of any of the trifling incidents, the petty happenings, that will unfortunately give my tale the earmarks of fiction for the uninstructed, but must equally place it beyond cavil as a recital of facts in the opinion of the initiated. I shall try, therefore, even at the cost of seeming tedious, to relate even the slightest things that may throw light on an as yet comparatively unknown subject upon the existence of which my claim to sanity, as well as that of my niece Portia and that of Owen Edwardes, depends.

The strange and inexplicable disappearance of two police officers from their station; the unsuccessful attack upon a third; the disappearance of a girl of twelve; these incidents may perhaps be recalled to the memory of citizens of the suburban town where they took place, when they read this explanation of those mysterious happenings. It is of course necessary to disguise to a certain extent the names of the principals in the affair, as well as the name of the town itself; I am not writing to satisfy anyone's morbid curiosity or to make Lynbrook—let me call it that—a place of pilgrimage. My sole incentive is to notify the "initiated" in America of what has actually taken place in this New World, of this invasion by the evil powers of the Old World's waste places. This accomplished, I shall feel more than repaid for the effort which it is for me, a woman unaccustomed to writing more than a friendly note, to pen this story which I have an intuition may prove a long one.

Since the heroic deaths, in the World War, of my niece and of Lieutenant Owen Edwardes, I have often debated within myself the advisability of setting down an account of those strange and awful happenings, and at last it was borne in upon me that I must carry on Portia's work as far as it was possible for me to do so. I lost no time in getting to work, once persuaded where my duty lay.

It is easy to begin, because my part in it really started with Portia's letter inviting me to make my home with her in Lynbrook.

Portia was the only child of my brother Chester, who was killed with his wife in an automobile accident in a day when automobiles were a rarity and not as perfect in their mechanism as they are nowadays. Portia was fifteen at that time. She was left an orphan with little or no means of support, as Chester, manager of the sales department of the Wilton Front Lace Corset Company, had lived up to his income to the last penny. I was, I suppose, the only living relative the child had here in the East, and when I found by inquiry that her mother's people were far from well-to-do ranchers in Montana and that Portia had scholarly ambitions, I decided to take

her to live with me until such time as she married or managed for herself.

When father died, he left the old home in Reading, Massachusetts, with sufficient income to keep it up. Chester had refused to benefit by father's death; he always said he could take care of himself better than a woman could take care of herself. For this reason alone, I felt morally engaged to do what I could for Chester's girl.

Portia came to live with me, then, and attended the public school of Reading and later on went to high school. By the time she had graduated from high school she had already made up her mind what she wanted to do. She intended to go to Vassar, where her father had made application when she was born, as proud parents do nowadays. The only obstacle was the lack of sufficient money to pay her tuition and other expenses. This did not dismay my niece.

Early in her girlhood I had occasion to admire her courage; her absolute fearlessness, rather. She faced the situation of no funds, and made herself mistress of it. The details I do not fully know, but I learned afterward that she eked out the little I managed to send her, by tutoring, by taking down lectures in shorthand and selling the transcribed copies to fellow students. Portia passed her final examinations with high marks and returned to me for a brief period of repose while looking about for a position of some kind.

Just what she was fitted for, she herself did not know. She had thought of library work, but I believe this was merely because she loved books so dearly, not because the career of a librarian appealed to her. Finally she decided that her best opportunity might lie in a secretaryship and was about to leave Reading for New York, when a letter arrived one morning that had been forwarded to her from college.

It was a wonderful morning in early July, 1910, when this momentous letter arrived. The sun was no brighter than my girl's face when she lifted it from the letter to exclaim: "Here is the very thing I would have chosen out of all the world, Aunt Sophie, could I have put my wishes into words."

She tossed the letter across the table to me and turned to stare out of the window into the dappled sun and shade of our pretty yard, which I realized she was really not seeing at all.

I took up the letter and read it hastily. It was from one Howard Differdale, of Lynbrook, N. Y., a frank, straightforward statement of his needs. As nearly as I can remember, it ran somewhat in this tenor:

He was a bachelor, living alone in a great isolated house about five city blocks, however, from a community known as Meadowlawn, and near subway lines that made it but half an hour from the heart of Lynbrook. The management of the house was in the hands of a "faithful Chinaman, Fu Sing." Mr. Differdale was engaged in occult research and experiment and desired a young woman assistant who was not only interested in his line of work but capable of helping materially, and of making the necessary observations in shorthand and on the typewriter.

He gave references as to his financial standing. He mentioned that his mother and sister lived in Meadowlawn and attended a Presbyterian church there. He would be glad to pay all expenses for Portia and a chaperon, if my niece were sufficiently interested to make the trip to Lynbrook for the purpose of deciding personally whether or not she desired to take the position he was offering.

The salary he offered was comparatively small, so much so that I wondered at my niece's enthusiasm. The matter of remuneration, however, was taken up later by Mr. Differdale

when Portia went down to see him, and augmented to an extent that would have made the position a highly desirable one from the financial standpoint, had it been known beforehand. Mr. Differdale explained to my niece a bit dryly that he had purposely made it very small in his letter, because he did not care for the type of woman who would have been attracted for the sake of the remuneration alone; he wanted someone whose strongest motive was the character of the work. But I am getting ahead of the story.

PORTIA went down to Lynbrook. She did not take me with her. She told me that she considered herself capable of judging both the character of the man and the nature of the work. She did not return to Reading, but I received a series of letters telling of her arrival, and of various other matters of interest. Some of these I still have, and shall quote here and there to show her first impressions, especially as some of them have a bearing on later events.

With a check, she wrote:

"Dear Aunt Sophie:

"I am enclosing a check for my first month's salary in advance. I am sending it all, because I really cannot foresee any particular needs that may arise to necessitate my having on hand more money than the amount of my fare down, which Mr. Differdale refunded, as he offered in his letter.

"I suppose you would like to know what kind of a man my employer is and what the work is for which I am engaged. I am bound by my honor not to divulge the exact nature of the work, but I can say that it is something which is for the good of all humanity, and that Mr. Differdale can be best judged by this: every penny he derives from an invention of his for weighing and sorting watch mechanisms, he devotes to his researches, the nature of which I cannot tell you. His whole life is bound up in carrying on this work.

"He is the most absent-minded of individuals, when it comes to his personal wants, although his mind is astonishingly alert when it is fixed upon his work. Fu Sing, the Chinese man-of-all-work, has to call him to his meals or I verily believe he would forget that such a thing as food existed. Fu Sing is a model servant, by the way; one never sees him about the house, but he accomplishes wonders in making everything clean and comfortable.

"The floors are hardwood with oriental rugs. No chairs; just piles of cushions. I sleep on cushions every night, and I must admit I find it extremely luxurious and comfortable. This is a part of Mr. Differdale's theory; he believes that the part of our lives spent in repose or recreation should be made as relaxing as possible and that complete change is a relaxation in itself. Oh, we need to gain fresh strength daily for the demanding work in which our nights are passed!

"Yes, all our work is done at night. So far, I have been out under the stars every night except when it has rained. We sleep all day. I am entering upon an entirely different life, Aunt Sophie, and it is wonderful—and fascinating—and inspiring! I admire my employer hugely; he is really a splendid man. You feel this just by being in his vicinity; it is a kind of atmosphere spreading about him."

A LATER letter read: "The first week I was here I did practically nothing but read his books or listen to his explanation of some of the experiments in which I am to assist him later on. I am all impatience, but I cannot help him materially until I have learned many, many things. I am studying now, every minute that I am not sleeping or taking the out-of-door recreation upon which he in-

sists and which is great sport, for it consists in exercising Boris and Andrei (huge white Russian wolfhounds) on the leash, in the fields that completely surround the high walls of the building where we live in what amounts to isolation.

"About five blocks away through the fields lies a little community called Meadowlawn. There are seven or eight solidly built-up blocks of brick and stucco houses, bounded on the side nearest us by a wide highway called Queens Boulevard. There are little stores along the boulevard, and the built-up streets run at right angles to this wider highway, which is much traveled by trucks and automobiles.

"Mr. Differdale took me to call on his mother and his married sister, the afternoon of the day that I arrived, and left me to lunch with them, as he wanted me to get in touch with everybody and everything in his neighborhood, so that I could satisfy myself about his standing. He did not need to do this, Auntie; I made up my mind to remain the moment I first laid eyes on him, and he told me afterward that he knew immediately that I was the one woman who could help him in his work, when he read my graduation thesis. He had managed to get hold of several essays by girls in my class, through the dean's influence, and said that he had selected Vassar girls because he believes that Vassar sends out adventurous spirits from her halls!

"Mrs. Differdale and Mrs. Arnold do not at all resemble Mr. Differdale, who is invested with a kind of nobility of bearing, a dignity—well, it is something spiritual that you feel about him and that his mother and sister do not possess in the smallest degree. They are both of the earth, earthy; although I'm sure it would hurt their feelings immeasurably to think that anyone considered them other than intensely—well, I'll call it religious, as being apart from spiritual.

"Mrs. Differdale is tall and thin, with snappy black eyes and frizzed gray hair that she conceals under a soiled boudoir cap mornings when it's in crimpers. She usually removes them before dinner at night, when she dons a silk dress and becomes a lady of leisure. I've found in talking with her that she is intolerant of people who think differently from herself, and very dictatorial in stating her opinions as settled facts. She has a curious nature that is really astonishing.

"Apropos of her curiosity, she has a trick of catching up a broom and rushing out to sweep the immaculately kept sidewalk on a moment's notice, if any out-of-the-ordinary noise happens to reach her listening ear; and it would be a mighty small noise that didn't, Aunt Sophie, I can assure you. During the two hours I was in her home that first afternoon, she questioned me on about every subject conceivable, but as I was not at all sure of my ground, I managed to evade most of her inquiries, especially those that concerned her son, about whose work she apparently knows quite nothing. She speaks of him with grudging admiration, chiefly because of the money he has made by his invention, it seemed to me.

"Her daughter, Aurora Arnold, is as much like the older woman as one pea is like another, except that she is younger. She has thin blond hair and pale blue eyes to which she tries to give an expression of sincerity and sympathy, although she didn't affect me as being what she pretended, and evidently wanted me to believe her. Mr. Arnold works in some kind of machine shop, but she refers to him with a considerable air as a "professional" man. She used to be a kindergarten teacher and—well, you may remember that I always disliked the idea of teaching because of that air of

superiority that teachers assume among their pupils until it is second nature. Mrs. Arnold has that air to a degree that, I'm ashamed to admit, I find insufferable.

"Like her mother, she is curious about everything and everybody in the neighborhood. I heard more gossip, disguised as friendly criticism, during luncheon time than I've ever heard in all my life before, even in Reading.

"I got an impression, vague to be sure, that Mr. Differdale's mother was jealous of my advantage in being his assistant, and in thus being admitted to the knowledge of his work. She told me, with rather a dry air, that she had never been invited to set foot within the precincts guarded by that ten-foot wall that surrounds the house where her only son lives and works. The thought that I had already been admitted there was only too evidently distasteful to her, and I felt that her disposition to be friendly was motivated by her belief that it would give her later opportunities to satisfy her curiosity, when more confidential relations should have been established between us.

"There are two Arnold children, disagreeable little brats of nine and eleven respectively. Their names are Alice and Minna. I have rarely had the misfortune to meet such malicious children. I can well believe their mother's complaint that they are always quarreling with other children on that street, but I do not believe it is the others who are at fault, as Mrs. Arnold declares. Their mother says she cannot make them obey her because they are so high-spirited. If this is the actual reason, then deliver me from high-spirited children for the rest of my life! The neighbors appear to share my dislike, for the two children seem extremely unpopular.

"Mrs. Differdale asked if her son had provided a chaperon for me and seemed very much put out at what she called his lack of consideration, assuring me that I would undoubtedly find myself very much talked about unless I insisted upon the presence in my employer's house of an older woman whose presence would protect me. I inquired innocently enough if her son had such a bad reputation, and she was quite wild at the insinuation, but kept returning to her observation that people in Meadowlawn were very gossipy."

In a previous letter Portia described the great square building of two stories that contained the immense laboratory and a roomy library where thousands of ancient and modern volumes were shelved. A dining room furnished in modern fashion, an up-to-date kitchen, and the sleeping quarters of Mr. Differdale, Portia, and Fu Sing, took up the rest of the building. Laboratory, dining room and Fu's kitchen and bedroom were on the ground floor, the library and other sleeping quarters and private bathrooms on the second floor.

Most of Portia's work when she first went there was the indexing for easier reference of the thousands of books in the library. The letter from which I quoted at length about Mr. Differdale's family was written about a month after Portia left Reading. From that time on her work must have absorbed her to the exclusion of everything else, for letters became more and more infrequent. The only things I could gleau from these brief messages were that her employer was a great and noble benefactor of humanity; that she had hurt her knee when racing with the wolfhounds one evening and a Mr. Owen Edwardes (who had a real estate office on the boulevard) had escorted her home, and that the dogs had "behaved like angels although he was a complete stranger to them"; that Mr. Owen Edwardes had motored her one evening to Pleasure Beach, an amuse-

ment resort near Lynbrook: that Owen Edwardes had a really exceptional mind; that Owen had been telling her how he was carrying out his dead father's ideals to build real homes for middle-class families at nominal cost.

I may be an old maid (Portia has since told me that I couldn't be an old maid if I tried, despite my unmarried state, and that the two Differdale women were typical old maids in spite of being married), but I can scent a romance while it's still a-budding. There was more mention of "Owen" in Portia's letters than any other one thing. It can be imagined, then, that it was like a bolt from the blue to have her write me a quiet, dignified letter without much detail, stating that owing to the neighborhood gossip (which had been strengthened by old Mrs. Differdale in her bitter jealousy of my niece's position of vantage) Howard Differdale and she had been quietly married, so that, as she expressed it, they could carry on their work without interruption or disturbance in future.

From this time on, Portia's letters became yet rarer. In them, too, there was no mention of Owen Edwardes, although I inquired directly about him twice. I tried to believe that Portia had misled me purposely in writing so much about the young man, in order to cover her infatuation with her employer, but I couldn't seem to reconcile this guile with her letters.

After her marriage, her communications took on a certain dignity and aloofness. It was as if Portia had "put aside childish things." She had suddenly grown up, had come to maturity of mind and spirit. Nevertheless, I could not disabuse my mind of the idea that there had been a close congeniality of mind and spirit between herself and the young man of whom she had written so much before her marriage.

Portia's marriage took place in January, 1910, six months after she went to Lynbrook. Her husband's death came very suddenly in December of the same year. She wrote me no details; merely said that he had been struck down most cruelly in the midst of his work, a victim to the evils from which he had been laboring to save humanity. She added that his death made her prouder of him, if anything, although it was of course a deep loss to her personally as well as to the world, which did not know what it had lost. She intended carrying on his work, I gathered.

I could not help being troubled at the thought of her in that lonesome spot, with no one but a Chinaman (to whom she referred as "my faithful Fu") to look after her comfort, and very glad I was when she wrote me in March, proposing that I sell or lease my house and make my home with her.

Perhaps I was getting a bit tired of living alone in a country town. Perhaps I was just plain homesick for the girl whom I had helped bring up. I leased my house, and hurried all preparations so that I should be free to go down to Lynbrook at the earliest possible moment.

I must confess that I was also actuated by a burning curiosity as to the nature of the work which my niece admitted had been the death of her husband, and which she continued to carry on, courageously, declaring that it was for the benefit of humanity.

PART 2

My niece met me at the Center Station in Lynbrook, and we took the subway out to the Meadowlawn district.

Portia had changed very much, though very subtly, since she left me a year and a half before. Her blue eyes were dazzlingly clear and looked at one uncompromisingly; there was mystery in their depths, though. Her

straight chestnut hair with its reddish shadows, which she usually wore in a coronet braid, was partially concealed by her black hat, a bit of millinery that cast a dark shade upon her warm brown skin and her glowing cheeks.

She did not look in the least like a sorrowing widow. Her manner, her glance, was that of a human being which knows itself so well that it cares little or nothing for the opinions of others. Her figure had grown fuller without being buxom, Portia being the type of woman called magnificent. She had not lost the odd charm of her mouth, which, when slightly parted, showed two upper front teeth a bit; this touch of lightness distracted from her otherwise serious expression, which was the first thing I noted about her.

As we emerged from the subway station upon the street, we were encountered by an elderly woman who inclined her head very slightly in recognition, but with a certain air. Portia touched my arm and stopped me.

"Aunt Sophie, I want to have you meet Mr. Differdale's mother, of whom I've already written you," she said very sweetly.

Mrs. Differdale jerked her head high. She made me think of a superannuated warhorse that hears the military band passing. She almost snorted, in fact, as she acknowledged the introduction. I had an idea that she was embarrassed about something, and Portia told me later that curiosity had made the other woman wait near the subway entrance so that she would be the first to meet me.

"I hope you will be able to persuade your niece to shut up that big, lonely house and live like a civilized human being," she said to me quite sharply. "It's her duty to come out of her seclusion and interest herself in worthwhile work for this community and the world."

Portia did not appear at all disturbed by this little stab, but as we went on our way she remarked, just a bit sadly: "Poor soul, she has never gotten over it that Mr. Differdale left everything to me, except an annuity sufficient for her modest needs. She considers me an interloper, especially as I've been obliged to refuse to admit her to the laboratory since my husband's death. She made several visits of condolence within a week."

We walked up about three blocks along Queens Boulevard. Portia pointed out the great ten-foot wall in the middle of the fields. I couldn't have missed it; it was a landmark, and a mysterious one at that.

We had just returned up Gilman Street, which runs from the boulevard to the Differdale place, when an automobile came up behind us. The driver stopped it and called Portia's name.

I knew before I was told that this young man with the merry twinkle in his dark gray eyes, the whimsical smile hovering about his generous mouth, and the light brown hair showing under his cap, was Owen Edwardes. I could not refrain from stealing a glance at my niece, but although I imagined I saw a deeper rose creeping up in her blooming cheeks, she maintained a quiet dignity and composure that told me quite nothing.

"Do let me take you home," implored the newcomer, leaning back to open the car door for us.

"Aunt Sophie, this is Owen Edwardes," Portia said. "My aunt is going to make her home with me, Owen."

"Aunt Sophie, I'm overjoyed to meet you and to learn that you are going to keep Portia company. I think she needs just you."

Portia smiled slowly. There was a certain gentle enjoyment of this masculine directness in her expression.

"I'm quite contented just now with my work, Owen," she rebuked. "It is everything to me, you know."

At that, his tone changed.

"You're right, I know," he said, with what I interpreted as a touch of bitterness. "You are the most self-sufficient woman I ever knew, Portia. All you have to do is to shut yourself away from the rest of humanity in your gray prison, and you're quite happy. No intruding friends for you, eh?"

Then turning to me: "I know it's only a matter of three blocks across the fields, from here, but it's hard walking on the frozen ground. If *you* get in, Portia will have to," he insinuated, with an appealing and boyish smile.

I liked him at once, so I got into the automobile, and of course Portia had to follow me. As Owen Edwardes backed the car around, my niece touched my arm and motioned with her head to a woman who, accompanied by two little girls rather strikingly dressed in bright red like twins, was walking toward us about a block away.

"That's Mr. Differdale's sister and her children," murmured my niece. "Thanks to you, Aunt Sophie, I'm now giving Aurora Arnold something to gossip about."

I promptly said "Fiddlesticks!" Really, I didn't care. I had taken a strong liking to young Owen Edwardes at first sight, and if he showed himself interested in Portia, I didn't intend to put obstacles in the way of his courtship of a charming young widow, in spite of what the neighbors might say.

Mr. Edwardes asked Portia if there were anything he could do for her, before he went. He offered to go to the Center Station for my trunk and bag, instead of leaving them to come over by express. Of course, I refused his offer, but I told myself that unless he were interested in Portia he wouldn't have offered to go so much out of the way for me.

PORTIA pressed a bell button inserted in the deep wall beside the heavy bronze door that presently swung open before her key, the bell being to notify Fu Sing that she had returned, so that he could regulate the hour for serving dinner accordingly. For a moment I had a feeling of panic when I heard that great door clang shut behind me. I remembered all at once that in this enclosure some mysterious work was carried on; that somewhere here, inside those unsurmountable walls, Howard Differdale had dropped dead under Portia's very eyes, almost at her side. I couldn't help shuddering.

The next moment Portia had thrown her arms around my neck and her warm kiss fell upon my cheek.

"Welcome home, dearest Aunt Sophie!" she was crying.

Her words, her voice, her kiss, swept unpleasant associations out of my mind, and I followed her cheerfully enough across the wide courtyard to the massive granite building that was to be my home in future. The house door was opened to us by the bowing, smiling Fu Sing, sucking in his breath in excruciatingly polite manner as he retreated before us.

Portia took me at once to my room on the second floor. It was wonderfully attractive, except that it had no bed, only a pile of silken cushions. She asked me if I wanted to try the cushions, or if she should telephone into Lynbrook for a regulation bed. It happens that I really do like to try new things, so I vetoed her suggestion at once; I thought I might enjoy playing that I was in some kind of Eastern palace.

At dinner, which was served in a handsome, entirely modern dining room that opened off the kitchen through a butler's pantry, Portia tried to give me a brief resumé of the

events of the year covered by her married life. I shall put it into a few words just at this point in my narrative.

Quite without the slightest attempt at concealment, she told me that she and Owen Edwardes had come close to having had an understanding, but that what she had learned of her employer's work had decided her that so long as Howard Differdale needed her, it would be her joy as well as her duty to work beside him. She had given Owen to understand this, delicately, as a woman can.

And then Mrs. Differdale had written her son a venomous note, quite as wicked as only so-called good, religious people could have made it. Mr. Differdale had quietly put the matter before my niece. As between his work and any personal inclinations, his work stood first, he told her. He needed her presence in his experiments; he felt the necessity of her aid in his work. But he would not take advantage of her interest, her good heart, at the expense of her reputation. When she indignantly declared that she would remain because she believed his work the most important thing that had come into her life, he asked her to permit him to give her his name.

"I married him, Auntie, but our marriage was nothing more than a wall of protection that we put up between our work and the malicious tongues of people in Meadowlawn. Mr. Differdale never made the slightest claim upon me as a husband. You see, Auntie, in order to be of assistance to him, I had to remain a maid; only a virgin can help in such experiments as he was carrying on."

As can well be imagined, I was interested by this simple statement of a rather astonishing situation. I inquired, tentatively, about the nature of this work to which Portia now referred as "ours" instead of "his". She tried to explain it, I could see, in some general fashion, but I found myself in such a daze after her explanation that I gave up trying to understand it, quite in despair.

I did glean, however, that Mr. Differdale was what she called "an initiate"; that he had gone deeply into occultism and the practise of magic; that he had actually performed incantations to call spirits into materialization, out in that great courtyard where I had seen mystical hieroglyphics cut into the stone. I learned, too, that he had come to his death because in over-excitement he had forgotten for a single moment that he must never overstep the limits of a circle within which he performed his spells. One night, my niece told me with perfect gravity, he had gone outside that circle, and Portia, standing beside him, had seen the results of the terrible blows which he must have received from invisible hands. (The newspapers had it that he had fallen from a window during a sudden attack of dizziness.)

The whole matter was so weird, so unbelievable, that my tired brain almost refused to accept it; I found myself wondering if my niece's brain had not been turned. But I was astonished at my own mental attitude when I discovered that in my new and strange surroundings I was deliberately trying to digest Portia's tale as gospel truth, taking it at her valuation. When I went with her after dinner into the great library and handled some of the curious old books, many in Latin and other foreign languages, and noted their queer titles, I began to swallow her story in great gulps, explaining away the difficult parts as things that I might not understand at the moment but should shortly be in a position to clear up for my logical, disbelieving mind.

The following morning I suggested to Portia that she let me do the marketing, which she or Fu Sing had

previously done by telephone. I wanted to occupy my time, and this appeared to me the most sensible thing for a woman of my habits; it would give me a little walk each morning, and it is human nature for a tradesman to give you better service when you appear in person than when you are nothing but a voice heard daily over the telephone. Portia did not care; she told me to do exactly as I chose, if it made me happy and contented. I got the names of her tradespeople and about 9 o'clock went out with my list of needed articles.

Directly opposite where Gilman Street adjoins the boulevard I saw a little building about twelve feet square, with gold lettering on the door: OWEN EDWARDES, Successor to A. J. Edwardes, Real Estate.

It gave me quite a comfortable feeling to know that the young man's office was so close at hand. A silly thought, perhaps, being quite illogical, but I felt it just the same. An automobile was standing outside and as I crossed the boulevard Owen himself came out and locked his office door. Then he looked up and took off his hat to me with a smile that warmed my heart, it was so frank and pleased-looking.

"Well, if here isn't Aunt Sophie!" said he gayly. "What is she wandering about for, so early in the morning?"

"I am going to do the marketing, Mr. Edwardes," said I, trying hard to be severe with him, for he really hadn't the slightest right to call me Aunt Sophie, although I believe Portia had not introduced me as Miss Delorme.

"Please don't frown on me so! I can't bear to start the day with a scowl," he implored whimsically. "And for pity's sake don't call me Mr. Edwardes. I can only be Owen to Aunt Sophie."

How could anybody maintain dignity with such a rogue? I laughed outright, whereat he joined me with a good will.

"Now, I call that fine, Aunt Sophie. We're good friends now, aren't we? Now that we've laughed together? Let me take you down to the butcher's or the baker's or wherever you're headed, won't you? I'm going that way myself—have to call on a Russian princess who's buying a house from me."

I hesitated. There would in all likelihood be further inferences drawn from my seeming familiarity with this pleasing young man. But, after all, the harm must have been done the evening before, for Portia had quite indifferently observed that most of the neighborhood gossip had its fountain-head at the Differdale-Arnold home on Elm Street. I got into the automobile, assisted by the affable Owen, who insisted upon covering me up as carefully as if we were starting for a long drive.

He let me out at the butcher's, about six blocks off. I noticed that everybody seemed to know him, hailing him cordially and familiarly as we went along. Even the policeman opened the door of his little station opposite the butcher-store, and shouted a facetious greeting. I thought he said something about going to see the princess, and not to be too proud of his swell friends; to which Owen called back as he started away, that he'd introduce O'Brien to the princess as soon as she settled in the neighborhood.

Poor O'Brien, looking so straight and robust in his blue uniform! How little did he dream then under what circumstances he was to meet the Russian princess!

That morning I made the acquaintance of Mike Amadio, the Italian fruiterer and green-grocer, and of Gus Stieger, the butcher. I left my orders, stating that I would call two

or three times a week at least for the purpose.

When I was returning, I met and recognized by their red dresses the two little Arnold girls, both of whom stuck their small noses pertly into the air at sight of a stranger, and went by me with the most impudent expressions on their faces. Had they been mine, I would have spanked them soundly for their insolence, but from what Portia had written me I felt sure their mother would commend them for having shown their "high spirits". I must add that I was so astonished at the behavior of the two children who at ten and twelve years should have known better, that I actually turned around as they passed me, distrusting my own eyes, and Minna stuck out her red tongue at me with considerable gusto.

I have always been rather glad that I did not feel anything but an itching desire to spank Minna, or I might have been conscience-stricken later on. But again, I'm getting ahead of my story. It is hard to get everything into its proper sequence, when one is looking back and can understand things that at the time seemed out of place and inexplicable.

I walked briskly back to the house without any other experiences, rang the bell, and was admitted by Fu Sing, who bowed and scraped his way backward as I entered. He informed me in his heathen dialect that "Missee" was in the "Libelly", which information I was unable to understand until my own inclinations drove me to resort to Mr. Differdale's books, there being really nothing else for me to do except read. There I found my niece lying comfortably among her silken cushions, absorbed in a black-covered volume with queer-looking circles and triangles on the cover.

She glanced up as I came in, and closed the book.

"Did you enjoy your marketing expedition? I so dislike running into Mrs. Differdale or Aurora, or those two insufferable children, that I'm coward enough to resort to the telephone," she observed lazily.

I tried to let myself down gracefully on to the cushions, and failed dismally.

"I've simply got to make some loose, flowing robes like yours, Portia," said I.

"They're ever so much more comfortable than ordinary clothes, Auntie," said my niece dreamily.

Just then I suddenly took note of a detail that had escaped my attention. It had been so becoming, and it seemed so natural to me, that I hadn't noticed it. Portia's negligee or whatever you could call it was not black nor did it have a touch of crape about it; instead, it was some kind of shimmering orchid shade over a metallic and shiny green, not mourning at all.

"Why, Portia!" I exclaimed. "You're not dressing in mourning, are you, my dear?"

She looked down at her flowing garments, regarded them quietly for a moment, then raised her eyes to mine.

"I don't believe in putting on black, Auntie, and neither did Mr. Differdale." (I realized then for the first time, that she had never called him by his first name to me.) "I do put it on to go out around Meadowlawn, for the sake of his mother and sister, who would believe otherwise that I was not showing the proper respect to his memory. I do not wish anyone to think that I am not respecting sufficiently the memory of that splendid man—but here—in the privacy of my own home, may I not relax sufficiently to permit myself the relief of this color, instead of wearing depressing black?"

"What do you wear at night, when you exercise Boris and Andrei?" I inquired. Boris and Andrei were the wolfhounds to whom I had been

introduced that morning, and who had shown a decided disposition to be friends with me.

"I wear whatever happens to be handy," Portia answered, with a slight curl of her fine lips. "Frequently I wear riding breeches when I go out with the dogs at night, as I am freer to run that way than I would be in skirts. Of course, I try to avoid Meadowlawn people; they'd be scandalized at such a costume," she added, shrugging her shoulders.

"Owen took me down to the butcher's in his automobile," I informed my niece. "He was on his way to call on a Russian princess."

PART 3

PORTIA sat up suddenly on her cushions, betraying a tense interest in what I was telling her.

"The Princess Tchernova?"

"He only said a Russian princess, Portia. Your butcher pointed out a very interesting house and beautifully landscaped grounds, some distance farther along the boulevard, which he told me the lady was on the point of acquiring."

"I'm sorry," Portia ejaculated, half to herself, as if in answer to some secret thought.

I regarded her with astonishment.

"Why sorry, my dear?"

"Well, really, Aunt Sophie, it would be hard to say just why I'm sorry that the Princess Irma Andreyevna Tchernova has decided to settle permanently in this neighborhood. I—I really don't like the lady."

"You have met her, then?"

"At Owen's office a couple of weeks ago. I was passing, and she was just going back to her automobile, so Owen insisted upon introducing her. She was—oh, it's quite impossible to put one's intuitions into words. She was—well, decidedly exotic, you know."

"What did she look like, Portia? Pretty?"

I began to have a faint suspicion that Portia's dislike for the Russian might be founded upon an unacknowledged jealousy.

"Pretty!" cried my niece. "She is one of the loveliest, and at the same time most evil, creatures I have ever seen in all my life."

"You haven't lived so very long," I reminded her dryly. "You're only going on twenty-five now, you know."

"She has a dead-white skin," Portia continued reminiscently. "Her mouth is like a crimson stain across that milky whiteness. Delicately flaring nostrils, like a spirited horse's. Her hair is ash-blond and she wears it drooping over her small ears, which must be low-set or they wouldn't show beneath it at all."

"I must confess I can't see what extreme loveliness there is in your Princess What-you-call-her, if she has a chalky complexion, and wide nostrils, and—"

Portia turned on me.

"I wish to heaven she weren't so exquisitely lovely!" cried she with passion. "It's not right! It's not fair, that such as she. . . . Oh, Auntie, you would have to see her to understand how fascinating she is!"

"Well, go on, Portia, and tell me more of her loveliness," I begged ironically.

"There's something about her light-hazel eyes that I can't quite understand, unless. . . . But then, I don't see how that could be possible—I mean probable," she corrected herself, vaguely.

"You are really making yourself very clear, Portia."

"I mean that when she looked down so that her eyes were in shadow, or when the shade of her wide-brimmed fur hat fell across her face, there was a warm light in her eyes that was almost, if not quite, garnet. I didn't—I don't—like that, Aunt Sophie."

"She must be an albino, if she has pink eyes," I snapped.

"But they're not pink. Her eyebrows, too—they're finely penciled and several shades darker than her hair. They curve downward until they meet in a sharp angle over her thin, delicately modeled nose. She shows her teeth too much when she smiles, too," mused my niece.

"Do you mean that she has a 'gummy' smile?" I insinuated.

"Oh, no, not at all. Her teeth just show a little, but they are small—and glittering white—and sharp—. She has a trick of moistening her red lips with her pointed little tongue."

"It seems to me that you were very observant, when one considers that you've only met the lady on a single occasion," I observed. "She must be almost as unpleasant as those Arnold children," said I, recalling my encounter with those disagreeable and precocious infants.

"Her hands are slender, fascinating, with polished almond-shaped nails. I wish I could have seen enough of them in repose to have noted the length of the third fingers."

"It sounds to me as if you thought you were on the track of something, Portia."

"I believe I am, Auntie! The more I think of it—."

She jumped up from her cushions, managing her flowing draperies with an easy grace that I envied, and went browsing about among the books, taking out first one, then another, and laying them aside. Afterward she brought them across the room, made a little pile beside her cushions, and sank down near by.

She began then to turn their pages so absorbedly that I went up to my own room after a little while and began to unpack my trunk, which had arrived that morning during my absence. It was just as well that I busied myself without depending upon Portia for distraction; she hardly spoke during lunch, after which she returned at once to her books, making notes here and there as she read.

It was late in the afternoon when she apparently finished whatever she was looking up. I had walked past the library door a couple of times, and peeped in to see if she was through.

She came up to my room, yawning widely.

"After more than a year of sleeping all day, it's hard to overcome the habit," she said, stretching luxuriously as she halted on the threshold.

"Why don't you take a little nap?"

"Because I'm trying to keep regular hours like yours, Aunt Sophie. Still . . . . Oh, you can have no idea how much I miss Mr. Differdale! The uplift, the inspiration, of his companionship, his work! If I could only have an opportunity to talk with him right now," said she tensely, "how thankful I'd be! He could solve my problem so quickly and easily—and I don't know that I'm prepared to undertake his work and carry it on alone, yet."

"For the Lord's sake, keep away from those magic spells you've been telling me about, Portia Delorme!" I cried in considerable alarm.

The very idea of her raising—figuratively, if not actually—the devil, made me sick with apprehension. I thought of her late husband's dreadful fate, and shuddered.

"Oh, don't be afraid, Auntie. I'm not going to take any risks if I can help it. But I certainly should like to talk with him," she finished musingly.

At this juncture Fu Sing came trotting up into the hallway to remark that the automobile of the honorable Mr. Edwardes was without, and that the honorable Mr. Edwardes wanted to know if the distinguished ladies wouldn't like a little spin up the boulevard to the bay, as the day was so springlike.

My niece was very much pleased, I could see, but she sent back word that she regretted that her work had piled up so that she couldn't take advantage of Mr. Edwardes' kind offer, but that her aunt would be delighted to accept. I was provoked with her, but then . . . how were other people to know that the marriage between herself and Howard Differdale was nothing but a business partnership? At least, she owed him the respect of not entertaining the attentions of another suitor for a few months.

Owen (he would have it that I must call him that) had the diplomacy to make me feel that my presence was what he had particularly desired. He tucked me in warmly and we went rolling along up the boulevard. We didn't talk much, for there was really very little to say, but he had the faculty of making you think that he was all the time considering your comfort. If I had married, I should have liked a husband like Owen. I thought to myself, that if this attitude was sincere, he ought to make a mighty agreeable husband for someone, and couldn't help wondering just what Portia was going to do with him, for that he was at her disposal I hadn't the slightest doubt.

At a point where the boulevard turned into Bayside Avenue, he stopped the car, so that I could enjoy the sight of the sun glittering on the waters of the bay. I leaned back, drinking in deep drafts of the balmy air with its promise of spring. A limousine with a fur-swathed chauffeur drew up alongside and Owen took off his hat, smiling that irresistible smile of his. The occupant of the other car pressed a button, and then leaned across the opening made by the dropped window-glass.

It was a woman, swathed in rich furs so completely that at first sight I could hardly distinguish more than the warm glitter of her eyes. At sight of them, I recalled Portia's description of the Russian princess, for those eyes glowed with a ruddy gleam that certainly made them seem garnets in the deep shadow of the enveloping sables.

"Ah, Ow-een, how charming, this so-spring day!" trilled the woman's voice blithely, with a little thrilling undernote of rich meaning that made my backbone stiffen involuntarily. . . That woman called him "Owen!" And with what an intonation!

"Aunt Sophie," at once exclaimed Owen, with a possessive air as he indicated me to the occupant of the limousine, "permit me to present the Princess Tchernova. My adopted aunt, Miss Sophie Delorme."

The princess pushed out slender, taper-tipped fingers with pretty impulsiveness. She appeared to take it for granted that she must be very much persona grata with anybody whom she chose to honor with her friendship.

"Ah, now I begin to feel myself so happy, with Ow-een's dear Aunt Sophie for a friend!" she exclaimed with what in any other woman would have been called gush, but was only delightfully friendly coming from her. "In my new home, I shall not be lonely, for I have the good friends about me, already, is it not? Yes, Ow-een?"

"Right, princess," my escort said heartily.

She thrust that slender white arm yet farther from the protecting furs and laid her outstretched fingers possessively on Owen's sleeve. My eyes followed the motion, as I thought to myself that the princess was either much interested in the young man or was a finished coquette. And then I ascertained an interesting fact, one that I felt would prove highly entertaining for Portia; the third finger of that patrician hand was so much longer than the middle and index fin-

gers that it amounted to an abnormality.

"Ow-een, have I not tell you that you must say the friendly 'Irma' to me, not the cold 'princess'? Ah, bad boy, how fast you forget a woman's words! It is doleful, is it not, *chère* Aunt Sophie?"

I jerked my eyes away from that strange hand with an effort, and met her keen glance. I knew immediately that she had seen and understood my absorption. She withdrew the hand with a slow, caressing movement, half smiling at me meantime with an odd significance that made me hot all over for some reason. First of all, I was displeased at her calling me aunt: even for a woman of her undeniable charm and aristocracy, it was an unwarrantable liberty. And then her expression when she smiled! I could not explain why, but it was as if she had suddenly taken me into her confidence in some secret matter in which she expected my tacit acquiescence and approval.

I could not reply to her implied expectancy of an affirmative answer; my blood must have flushed my face noticeably, for she all at once turned her gaze from me with a glitter of those hazel eyes, which now seemed almost green as she leaned away from her sables and out into the sunlight. Her lips parted, ever so little, disclosing sharp white teeth, beautifully regular. I suppose most people would have said that her smile was charming, but I know that when she smiled at me I felt only a dreadful sinking feeling, a kind of growing terror, blind terror at I knew not what. I leaned back in the automobile with a sickness in my heart that suddenly took all the beauty out of that delightful day.

"I could not resist to look at the new home, Ow-een," purred the princess, drawing her furs about her sinuous body with the hand that she now kept hidden beneath those luxurious folds. "I have already send the furnitures, so that I may live here, with my so-dear friends close by—soon—soon."

How those words lingered on her red, red lips! An involuntary shudder gripped me and made me tremble. I felt premonitions of evil; shook them off angrily; felt them return stronger than before at the princess' little side glance at me, a glance half amused, wholly tolerant, as of one who knew her innate powers but disdained to use them upon so entirely insignificant an individual. She moistened her full crimson lips with a pointed little tongue and addressed herself again to Owen.

"When I make the house-warm, my Ow-een, you will be my guest? And the beautiful Mrs. Differdale? And of course, the *chère* Aunt Sophie."

Delicate raillery sounded in her well-modulated voice. She sank back languidly into the brocaded interior of her car, nodded her head like a queen dismissing her court, and was whirled away.

Owen drew a deep breath and turned to me, eyes sparkling.

"Some princess, eh, Aunt Sophie? The Princess Irma Andreyevna Tchernova. Isn't she a wonder? Won't it wake things up to have her in the neighborhood? She and Portia ought to be great friends, don't you think? Two such brilliant women," he went on fatuously.

I was furious. I suppose I showed it in my voice and manner. I remarked coldly that the princess had not impressed me especially as being anything but a finished coquette. Of course I should not have said that; men are proverbially obtuse where pretty women are concerned, and Owen was no exception to the rule.

"Why, Aunt Sophie!" he gasped, evidently astonished at my bitter attack upon the Princess Tchernova.

"Don't 'Aunt Sophie' me, young man!" I responded, somewhat tartly. "I have no intention of being an aunt to everybody in this vicinity."

I regretted my abruptness the moment I had spoken, for Owen turned genuinely hurt eyes to me.

"Do you really mind my calling you 'Aunt'?" he asked.

"I don't mind you," I qualified, "but I don't see why that—that Russian should call me 'Aunt'."

He smiled.

"I'm glad you don't mind *me*, Aunt Sophie, for I want you to know that I'm hoping, some day, really to be your nephew."

His dark gray eyes sparkled and his lips compressed determinedly as he looked honestly into my eyes.

I couldn't help it. I leaned forward and patted the arm that lay across the seat in front of me. Owen did an odd thing for an American; he caught up my hand and touched his lips to it very gently. Then he started up the car and without any further conversation we turned back, for a slightly chilly wind was springing up.

When he helped me out, he took both my hands in his and stood for a moment without speaking, his eyes on mine. Then, "Be my friend with Portia, Aunt Sophie," he said in a low voice, dropped my hands and went away without looking back.

PORTIA was sleeping when I returned, and did not waken until long after dinner, which I had to eat alone, as Fu Sing managed to explain that my niece had given orders not to be disturbed. She came into the library about 10 o'clock that night, just when I was telling myself that I ought to go to bed. She was looking especially beautiful, it appeared to me; a wholesome beauty that did my heart good, not that exotic, evil loveliness possessed by the Russian.

"Well, Aunt Sophie, did you and Owen have a heart-to-heart talk this afternoon, and get things nicely settled?"

Her question brought my eyes smartly to her mischievous face.

"Portia Delorme!" (I never could remember her married name to say it at the proper times.) "Just what do you mean to insinuate?"

"Oh, nothing, Auntie."

But she laughed as she flung herself across a pile of cushions opposite me.

"If you really want to know," I said with dignity, "that young man is deeply interested in you."

Portia fumbled with the tassels that adorned her negligee, eyes downcast.

"I'm not so sure of that, Auntie. He's—he's been rather taken up by the Princess Tchernova since she's been haunting his office of late."

"She's nothing but a client," I reminded her.

And then there flashed into my mind a picture of the Princess Irma's slender white hand, with that strange finger.

"Portia, she has the oddest hand I've ever seen. Her third finger is so long that—"

"Aunt Sophie, are you sure?"

My niece had suddenly grown extraordinarily grave. She sat up among the cushions stiffly, her lips parted tensely.

I described the Russian's hand minutely. I tried, rather stumblingly, to impart the impression (so fleeting, so vague, but so definitely unpleasant) that her intimate smile had made upon me, and finished by saying with considerable acidity that she was the most perfect specimen of finished flirt I had ever met.

Portia, who had listened without interrupting me while I described the princess' hand, suddenly flashed into vivid life at my last words.

"Ah! And Owen? I mean, how does it appear to him? Does he—is

he letting that—that creature beguile him?"

It was so natural, that touch of woman's jealousy, that I felt like smiling, but controlled my features by an effort.

"Owen Edwardes is a young man whom it would be hard to persuade into believing evil of any woman," I told Portia thoughtfully.

"In other words, Owen is letting that woman fool him with her studied wiles? Oh, and I can do nothing, quite nothing! I am tied down, quite helplessly, by the respect I owe to Mr. Differdale's memory!"

"Why, Portia, is it as bad as all that?" I said stupidly, as I saw her fling out clenched hands with a gesture of desperation.

She laughed shortly, recovering her poise as abruptly as she just had lost it.

"Yes, Aunt Sophie, it's as bad as that," she echoed. "I love him. I loved him from the time we first met. But—"

"You loved him, and yet let your wretched work come between you?" I exclaimed reproachfully. I may be an old maid, but I could not appreciate my niece's strange attitude.

Portia turned her grave face upon me.

"You see, Aunt Sophie, you don't entirely understand the nature of the work Mr. Differdale was doing. If you did, I'm sure you would have been the first to advise me to sacrifice everything else in the world for just that."

Her voice rang with earnestness, but I shook my head slowly. I had to admit that I couldn't conceive of any work that would be so important as to be allowed to stand between two eminently suitable young people who cared for each other as I felt she and Owen cared.

"You see, you don't understand," Portia repeated insistently. "And then, later on, I married—and it was too late."

"And now, you're so particular to pay public respect to a man who wasn't your husband, only your business partner, that you cannot even give Owen the satisfaction of some kind of an understanding, so that he won't be on pins and needles during the months of your—widowhood!"

I suppose I did say that in a very nasty manner. I couldn't help it. I was exasperated with Portia. But she did not seem angry at my words or my manner. Instead, she began fussing again with a tassel.

"I suppose I might do something like that," she admitted.

I was jubilant.

"Of course, you know I cannot be seen with him in public for some time to come, and it wouldn't be wise to have him calling here for a while yet," she went on, musingly.

"You're thinking of that old Differdale female, aren't you? And your husband's sister? And the rest of the Meadowlawn gossips? Shame on you, Portia Delorme!"

She laughed right out then.

"You're an incorrigible matchmaker, aren't you, Auntie? Well," she added lightly, "we'll see what can be done in the matter."

"I'm going to bed," I said shortly, rather disgusted at the indifferent way in which she seemed to take things. "You can stay here and laugh over that boy's love, if you wish."

"Aunt Sophie, I've got other things to do than sneer at the honest love of a man whom I—of whom I think as highly as I do of Owen. I've been sleeping this afternoon because I've work to do tonight, and it's time now that I began it. Fu Sing is fixing me something to eat, and then—"

"You're going to do that—that—?"

"Auntie, don't you realize that Mr. Differdale was taken away just at the

zenith of his powers and knowledge, with his work unfinished? I've got to carry it on; it's up to me. Especially since the Princess Irma Andreyevna Tchernova is going to settle in this neighborhood."

So stern, so uncompromising was her intonation, that I got right up off my cushions, kissed her a bit timidly, and scooted up to my room. Yes, scooted is the right word; I felt that my room was going to be a haven of refuge for me that night, as far as possible from the open courtyard where Portia might later be carrying on her strange performances.

I couldn't help thinking, as I put my hair into crimpers (Portia likes it better waved and it's quite the same to me) that my niece was going a little too far in her jealousy of the beautiful foreigner. A coquette the princess might be, but now that I tried to look at the matter without prejudice, if she were infatuated with Owen, it was no one's business but her own if she attempted to win his affection. Of course, as Portia's friend I didn't want the princess to succeed, but if Owen were to prefer Irma to Portia, and Portia didn't feel like lifting a finger to hold him, then it was Portia's loss and Irma's gain.

I went to bed, wondering only what my niece would be doing throughout the long night hours. I had my suspicions. As for me, I slept splendidly, in spite of a heavy electrical storm that must have come up in the middle of the night, for when I went to the market the following morning, there were traces of the destruction wrought, such as many trees with broken boughs. One telegraph pole and all the wires attached to it lay across the side street running parallel with Gilman street.

Gus Stieger, Portia's estimable if expensive butcher, beamed happily at me as I waited for him to finish a big order he was just preparing.

"Let it wait, let it wait, ma'am. I'm just cutting off the tough pieces" —he winked atrociously—"for the Russian lady's wolves. That's sure going to be fine business."

"The Russian lady's wolves?" I echoed, somewhat at a loss, until the truth flashed across me and I interpreted his facetiousness aright. "Oh, you mean the Princess Tchernova, don't you?"

"Uh-huh. She's movin' today into that there big house and she's brought a cage with five big gray wolves, for pets."

A huge laugh widened his good-natured mouth.

"Ain't that a good one, though?" he added. "Wolves for pets!"

I gave him my order and went over to the grocer's. Mike Amadio appeared somewhat disgruntled, and upon inquiry I found that he was as disgusted and disappointed in the newcomer as Gus had been delighted.

"No bread! No sugar! No butter! No eggs!" mourned Mike with expressive hands a-spread in gesticulation. "No salads! No vegetables! What does the lady eat, I want to know? Meat!" disgustedly. "Just meat—and meat—and meat! Red, bloody meat! Like a savage, that proud lady, she eats nothing but meat. Gus has told me what quantities he sends to her where she has been boarding. Pounds and pounds of bloody meat every day!"

"Perhaps she has some savage Russian pets, Mike," I suggested.

Evidently Mike had not thought of this. He nodded with sullen acquiescence, but I could see that he was much disgruntled. It was apparent that the tradesmen in Meadowlawn had been making their plans with regard to the newcomer and were being sadly disappointed. It seemed that the Princess Tchernova was not a tremendously large con-

sumer of fancy groceries, greens, or dairy products.

"Two servants," grumbled Mike, selecting romaine for my order. "A big man who goes around in a fur coat like a walking bear. And an old woman with bare feet, *signorina*. Bare feet!"

PART 4

I TOLD Portia when I got home (she came out at my entrance, heavy-eyed from loss of sleep) about Mike's complaints, merely as indicative of the attitude of the tradespeople, and as a matter of humorous interest. To my surprize she appeared to take it seriously, questioning me about the item of the meat and the lack of other staples such as salt and sugar with a pointed interest that roused my curiosity.

Fu Sing brought in a tray with a light salad and a pot of tea, and Portia ordered it taken into the library, where she let herself down wearily upon a pile of cushions, her odd breakfast on a tabouret in front of her.

"I wish I were a man," she remarked, poking aimlessly at the salad. "I mean, of course, a man like Mr. Differdale. It is very hard for a woman, especially for me, feeling as I do about Owen, to undertake what I fear must be undertaken, now that the Princess Irma has actually come to stay in Meadowland. I doubt my own powers. I fear my own impulses. I would give anything—anything—for a talk with *him*."

I knew whom she meant by that "him"; she was referring to the man who had given her his name that he might carry on his work uninterruptedly, a thing that I could not help regarding as a stupendous piece of egotism, no matter what my niece thought about it.

"You see," went on Portia, her smooth brow crinkling a bit as she looked up to meet my eyes with frank sincerity, "people will think I'm jealous, and Aunt Sophie, you must believe me with all your heart when I tell you I'm not jealous. That is, not as people interpret jealousy. No, if Owen can be happier with another woman, I would be the first to wish him joy. I love him enough for that. But—oh, it must not be Irma Andreyevna Tchernova! No, no!"

The sudden passion in her voice, the actual horror that now writhed across her tortured face, startled me.

"Why, Portia, my dear! Whatever put the princess into your mind as a rival?" I said stupidly.

She stared at me for a minute without speaking.

"It's my opinion that the princess is just an idle woman who is looking for a flirtation to pass away the time. She's the type of woman who wants a good-looking man always hanging about her, Portia. I don't think she's really interested in Owen."

"Oh, these unutterably narrow-minded Meadowlawn people!" cried my niece, suddenly veering about in another direction. "If only they were not so contemptibly small-minded! If they would only not believe me disrespectful to Mr. Differdale's memory, I should be free to let Owen put his ring on my finger. Then—perhaps—that woman—"

"My dear Portia, why don't you tell Owen that you are willing to be engaged to him, privately, until such time as the proprieties would consider it good form to announce the engagement publicly?"

"Aunt Sophie! If I am going to be engaged to Owen, I'm not going to hide it from the world as if I were ashamed of our love. I won't carry on a clandestine love affair. No, no! There ought to be some other way."

She poured herself another cup of tea.

"You and I are going to take a walk with Boris and Andrei tonight," she said, all at once, as if she had made up her mind to something. "We'll go up across the subway bridge back of the house, and down by the old Burnham place which the princess has taken. Wolves for pets —it's strange."

Her inferences left me deeply stirred. It was if she had made a conclusion that she could not put into words. She did not mention the matter again, changing the subject to one of summer clothes, which she thought we'd better be thinking about soon, for spring would shortly be upon us.

After breakfast, Portia went to her room, leaving me again to my own devices. I began to realize that I was going to be very much alone, and that it might be wise on my part to associate myself with some church in the vicinity, in order to form a little circle of acquaintances. I thought it would only be decent, under the circumstances, for me to make a little call on Mrs. Differdale and her daughter, and make the inquiry of them; they would undoubtedly be fully advised as to what churches were nearest, and what their denominations were. About half past 3 o'clock, then, I went out, leaving word with Fu Sing (Portia had apparently gone to sleep again to make up for her night's wakefulness) that I would return about 5.

When I walked up Elm Street, Mrs. Differdale stood on the porch steps, wrapped in a shawl. In the cellar-area, holding a pair of her husband's old trousers about her head, the suspenders dangling strangely about her ears, stood Aurora Arnold, absorbedly listening to Gus Stieger. When Mrs. Arnold caught sight of me, she rightly inferred that I was about to call, and disappeared into the cellar with her interesting and original head-dress hastily pulled down out of sight. Her mother did not see me until I was almost at the foot of the steps. I could hear Gus plainly.

"Meat. Great hunks of bloody meat, she orders for the wolves," he was saying with unction. "Big gray fellows they are, that snarl and bare their yellow teeth at you. I'll say I'd hate to be near if one of 'em got out. How do, Miss Delorme?"

He touched his hat hastily, crossed to the curb, mounted his bicycle and rode away.

"Come right in, dear Miss Delorme," Mrs. Differdale hastened to say cordially. "You'll excuse my hair being in curlers, and my boudoir cap, I know. There's a church sociable tonight, and you know, it's one's duty to look one's best in the house of the Lord."

As she ushered me in at the front door, her daughter rushed up the front stairs precipitately. She did not meet my eyes and I pretended not to have seen her. She was certainly a sight, curlers sticking out all over her head, and those trousers legs hanging down over her shoulders, suspenders dangling.

"Go right into the parlor, and I'll call Aurora down, Miss Delorme. So glad you came of your own accord," declared Mrs. Differdale, somewhat ambiguously I thought, "without waiting for a formal invitation. I did have some ironing to do, but perhaps it will be much better for me to sit here with you and chat. I can iron tonight. Oh, I forgot, there's the sociable. Well, tomorrow will have to do," she added graciously.

I hated to sit down, after what seemed to me hardly a cordial welcome.

"I'm really in a great hurry," I prevaricated. "I just ran in to see if you could advise me what church is

nearest here, and what denomination it is."

"There's a Lutheran church three blocks away; that's the nearest. But I don't think you'd enjoy the preacher, really; he's egotistical. When people give him clever suggestions about building up membership and so forth, he quite scorns them. Then there's a Presbyterian church five blocks up the boulevard. Aurora and I go there. We find the people very congenial, and so appreciative of our efforts to build up the church. And our minister is such a nice little chap, not at all above listening to our advice when we try to help him with suggestions. Aurora! Why don't you come down? We might give Miss Delorme a cup of tea."

"I'll be down as soon as I get my hair fixed," called back the younger woman, in a far from agreeable voice.

"Please don't make any tea for me," I murmured, getting to my feet hurriedly. "I must return at once. I really must. I don't want to interrupt your ironing, and I have much to do myself."

Mrs. Differdale did not try to detain me.

"I know just how that is," she said with a very discernible effort to be agreeable. "I won't detain you, of course." Then with a sudden lowering of her voice: "Did you hear about the Princess Tchernova's five wolves?"

"Oh, are there five?" I murmured.

"Five great savage wolves," affirmed Mrs. Differdale, the soiled boudoir cap bobbing in asseveration. "And the quantities of meat they consume is simply unbelievable. One might almost suspect that the whole household ate nothing but meat," she finished with gusto, her eyes rolling.

"I believe Gus Stieger is pleased with his new customer," I offered, lightly.

"Naturally, Miss Delorme. But if she weren't keeping those wolves well penned up in a strong cage on her grounds, one would feel nervous about having such a menagerie in the neighborhood. They must be frightful, ferocious beasts," she shuddered.

Just as we reached the front hall, Mrs. Arnold came down the stairs. She had removed the white curl-papers and her unnaturally crimped hair lay in ropy locks across her forehead. A sweater of brilliant rose-color concealed part of a not especially fresh blouse.

"I met the princess this morning, mother," said Aurora, with an affected air. "She's really very charming. I had both girls with me, and she admired them so much. She says she simply adores children, and begged me to let her have them over to spend an afternoon with her when she's settled. She was so attracted to Minna. But she told me that she thought Alice needed a more fattening diet, that the child was growing too fast and getting too thin. She is certainly a delightful person," declared Aurora, with a genteel simper.

"She said she wanted us to be over to tea some time, didn't she, Aurora?" Mrs. Differdale added, with a poorly done attempt at indifference. I could just feel her sense of importance at having thus been singled out of the entire community for this signal honor.

"How lovely!" I said hypocritically, and made my escape with difficulty after all, for both women pursued me out on to the piazza, talking about the Princess Tchernova's beauty, her charm, her wealth, her poise, the social importance of her settling upon Meadowlawn as a place of permanent residence.

As I turned up Gilman Street on my way home, I saw the princess' limousine standing outside Owen's little office, the chauffeur muffled almost to the eyes in shaggy gray fur. I had sufficient curiosity—perhaps on

account of my interest in Owen, for Portia's sake—to walk past the office before crossing. I glanced at the chauffeur as I went by, and was simply aghast at the fierceness of his black eyes; he looked to be a veritable Tartar, as he stared unseeingly past me into Owen's office, where the princess sat comfortably enough in a chair near the flat-top desk behind which Owen was ensconced.

The Russian leaned forward, plucking at the same time something from the bosom of her dress. She stretched out slim white arms from the ermine wrap that swathed her lissom figure, and I distinctly saw her fasten something to Owen's coat lapel. It made me feel furious again on Portia's account.

I crossed the road, in front of the limousine. The chauffeur's inscrutable black eyes snapped with such ferocity at the pretty little scene that I actually jumped when he ground out—so explosively, with such concentrated fury that it sent cold chills down my spinal column—what sounded like "*Volko Dlak!*" The sounds stuck so tenuously in my memory that when I got into the house (about half past 4 it was, then) and met Portia, dressed in one of her lovely, clinging, colorful negligees, I asked her at once what the words could be, and articulated them painstakingly for her.

She stared at me for a moment, uncomprehending. Then the soft color began to fade out of her cheeks.

"Not two words, just one," she said, her smooth brow contracting, a strained expression on her face that had grown strangely serious. "I'm afraid that what he said was '*volkodlak*'."

"You seem to recognize the word phonetically, Portia. Was it Russian? I didn't know you were acquainted with that tongue."

"It was Russian, Aunt Sophie. No, I'm not particularly up in that language, except in the case of a few words, or combinations of words, which I've had occasion to learn during my work with Mr. Differdale. That particular word I know. I wish it had been anything else," she finished somberly. "Don't ask me about it just now, please, Auntie. I'm in no mood to discuss Russian or any other language. But I would like to know just why that chauffeur said that," she finished, musingly.

"It's my opinion that he was fearfully upset about something," I contributed. "Do you suppose that he was disgusted to be kept waiting there while milady pinned flowers in Owen's buttonhole?"

There! The cat was out of the bag. I hadn't intended to bother Portia with that, but it just slipped out, inadvertently. I could have bitten off my tongue when she turned her slow gaze upon me as if to verify with her eyes what her ears had heard.

"The Princess Tchernova was pinning a flower on Owen's coat? You saw that? Oh, it is infamous! And I must stand by and do nothing!" burst out my niece. Her feeling seemed to me all out of proportion to the offence. "Yet—I must save him, somehow."

She wrung her hands tensely, then with a sudden change of front, took a strong grip on herself and laughed, albeit rather an apology of a laugh.

"Let's have dinner, Aunt Sophie. I think perhaps I worked too late last night and didn't sleep enough today. It's made me irritable. A brisk walk with Boris and Andrei will do me good tonight, after dinner—wake me up a bit, perhaps."

"Oh, Portia, you're not going to work again tonight?" I began, when she silenced me with a single high look.

"Aunt Sophie, when the Bible told us to watch and pray, it should have added, and *work*, lest we fall into the clutches of such foul evil as the human brain can hardly conceive. Come,

let's have dinner. Fu must have it ready."

We ate in almost complete silence. I could see that my niece was more than ordinarily abstracted, so I did not try to make conversation, merely replying to such queries as she put to me from time to time.

"What kind of flower was it that the princess pinned on Owen?"

I did not know. I had been too far away to see what it was. And then, while I searched my store of subjective impressions, I remembered that I had seen in the limousine, in passing, a vase of full-blown yellow marigolds.

Portia appeared disturbed again, out of all proportion, when I told her my impression, remarking that I didn't understand how an aristocratic woman like the princess could bear the acrid, pungent odor of those old-fashioned flowers, which are all very well for decorative purposes in flower-beds, but hardly sweet-perfumed enough for a fastidious woman's taste.

"I mustn't lose my grip on myself. I mustn't. I mustn't." Portia repeated several times.

I thought she must be very tired indeed to let such a trivial incident trouble her so deeply, but laid it to her love for Owen and her fear of losing him.

PART 5

After dinner my niece told me she was going to put on outdoor clothes and I had better change into something darker than the light gray tailored suit I had worn with my fox-furs that afternoon. When she came into my room, she wore riding breeches under a three-quarters rough tweed overcoat. Boris and Andrei leapt repeatedly upon her, overjoyed with the prospect of an outside run, which they understood they were to have when they saw leashes and a short whip in their mistress' leather-gauntleted hands.

"Will you take Boris, Aunt Sophie? Boris is easier to manage, I think. You'd best take the whip, too. I shan't need it with Andrei. In fact, I shouldn't need it at all, both dogs are so accustomed to immediate obedience to my voice. You may possibly be obliged to use it as a persuasive for Boris, who isn't entirely used to you yet."

She leashed the hounds and gave Boris over to me, and we went out into the quiet night. The plan was to walk up Gilman Street in the opposite direction from Queens Boulevard, and return past the old Burnham house.

Portia seemed worked up about something. I presumed she was still thinking about the Russian and the flower in Owen's buttonhole, so I remained silent rather than to appear cognizant of her thoughts. Presently, however, as we turned to the left, I asked her if we had any special objective, apart from walking past the Burnham house. I could feel her eyes upon me in the soft darkness.

"We're going to take a little walk about the Burnham grounds, Aunt Sophie. I want to see—I want—oh, it's very hard to explain! You may think it dreadful of me—but—Auntie, you've just got to trust me, that's all. I've got to go into the princess' grounds. I've got to look into her windows, if I get a chance. I can't explain everything now, but my reason is very important, more than I can possibly tell you. Won't you trust me, please?"

Her voice was so entreating that I felt my heart pushing the words of assent to my tongue's tip. After all, Portia was my niece. She cared for Owen Edwardes. I really could not believe that the Russian, so exotic and bizarre a creature, could have become in reality fascinated by a young man who was, after all, just a good-looking, healthy young American business man. If the princess did not care for him, then she only wanted to flirt, to

pass away some idle moments in what to her was only a pastime. I ranged myself on Portia's side immediately, feeling that my niece was being urged by some motive bigger than mere feminine jealousy, and that she would make this clear to me in good time.

"Portia, my dear, you do just what you think is best. I can't say I'm especially attracted to the princess. And," I added, my heart suddenly warming pleasantly at the recollection, "I like the way Owen calls me Aunt Sophie!"

Portia came close to my side, reached out her free hand, and gave my arm a caress that meant more than words. I felt that she understood what a strong ally she had in Sophie Delorme.

By the time we reached the grounds of the princess' house, the dogs had quieted down a little from the exuberant spirits they had shown during the first part of our walk, when they had pulled at their leashes wildly. It may have been fancy, but I felt that Boris showed distinct reluctance to enter the grounds of the Russian's house, grounds full of deep, dark shadows from the shrubbery that would be so beautiful in summer but that now seemed terrifyingly like hideous, ragged-garbed skeletons in the dim light of the stars.

"Auntie," whispered my niece guardedly, although we were far enough from the house to have spoken loudly without having been overheard, "will you take Andrei's leash, please, and wait for me here? I'm going into the grounds and I can see that the dogs won't be pleased to accompany me."

"I don't want you to go alone," I whispered back, suddenly oppressed with a disinclination to remain there myself alone, where every bush seemed a skulking beast ready to spring out upon me. I was ashamed, but I preferred going with Portia into I knew not what, to remaining alone.

"Well, we can try it with the dogs, but I'm afraid they won't come, Aunt Sophie."

We experienced no particular trouble, however. Keeping close to the hedge that bordered the path to the rear of the house, Portia and I walked cautiously along with Boris and Andrei held tightly and close to us, until we had reached the house. There were lights in front, and I felt Portia's hand drawing me in the direction of the drawing room windows. We managed to get behind a great scrawny bush that scattered the light streaming from one as yet uncurtained French window. (I have since wondered at the carelessness of the princess that night in exposing her intimate home life to the curious eye of the midnight prowler. At any rate, the following day curtains hung at all the windows and were drawn at dusk.)

The scene within the great drawing room was a lively one. The princess, glittering and shimmering in a gown of some clinging green metallic cloth, reclined on a heap of what appeared to be rich rugs thrown over piled cushions. A band of gold set with diamonds flashed about her head and from it hung a square diamond by a link, so that it flashed with dazzling rainbow splendor as she turned her head from side to side. Her garments clung about her as if they had been molded to her supple form and were indeed a part of her own personality.

She was evidently directing the arrangement of draperies and furniture in her new home. As she directed, long white arms and pointed fingers glittering with flashing gems, the chauffeur and a bent old woman hurried hither and thither to carry out her orders.

The chauffeur was a handsome fellow in a heavy way, and apparently deeply attached to his mistress, to

judge from the solicitous manner in which he carried out her commands.

The woman (I learned later that her name was Agathya) was much older than her mistress, who might have been any age from sixteen to forty, so vivid and strange was her exotic loveliness. Agathya looked about sixty. She had straggling gray hair, drawn tightly back into a bunch at the top of her head. Her face was deeply lined, her eyes roving, her manner shrinking and servile. She wore a dark brown one-piece dress, girdled by a brown silk cord, and was barefooted. Her stooped shoulders made her appear of medium height, but I think Agathya would have been a tall woman had she thrown back her shoulders and stood upright.

These two people approached their mistress with attitudes so entirely different that it was like watching a drama on a stage to look through that wide window and see them; the man with a proud kind of watchful anxiety to please, the woman seemingly half terrorized, trembling and shrinking every time the princess addressed her.

"Portia, I believe that poor old woman is ill-treated," I whispered, as we saw Agathya shrink backward at a sudden motion of the Russian's hand toward her.

I had hardly said it before something happened in the lighted room. The old woman, attempting to place a vase upon the tall mantel shelf, miscalculated, slipped, and to save herself let the vase go. It fell, crashing, to the tiled hearth. Agathya did not rise from the crumpled, shrunken heap into which she had huddled her body.

The Princess Irma rose, however. She flew out of the pile of cushions, her face transformed by fury. She ran over to that prostrate figure crouching there. She stood over it for a moment, saying something that we could not hear, nor could we have understood her Russian had we heard. Then she thrust out a small foot shod with a buckled shoe, the heel of which sparkled with brilliants, and gave that poor old woman's form a harsh push that sent Agathya sliding across the hearth. Nor did it end there. The Russian snatched at something that had been lying on the mantel, and lifted one arm high over the poor creature who now began to struggle upward, with lifted hands and arms over her face.

From my reading I recognized the instrument that the princess wielded as a knout, and felt sick at what was apparently about to happen. But the man came springing across the room to her side. He leaned down with careless indifference to the princess' rage and helped Agathya to her feet. Then he turned and began to talk to his mistress, who listened with head thrown back, eyes flashing redly upon him. Her arm dropped; she let the knout slip from her jeweled fingers, and laughed. Her begemmed hand motioned away Agathya, who slunk from the room, head bowed, shoulders bent, like one in mortal fear.

"Sergei! Sergei!" I could hear the princess cry out clearly, between trills of gurgling laughter that I rather saw than heard. She put out her hand to him, with an inimitably gracious gesture, and he caught it to his lips, sinking to one knee as he kissed it with passionate abandon. She withdrew it then, with a kind of indifference, leaned over, passed her cheek lightly across his upturned, adoring face. At that, he flung himself flat upon the rugs at her feet, and I could see that he was putting her dress to his lips as he almost groveled there.

So quick had been the little drama that neither Portia nor I had a chance to interchange a word, but now Portia pulled at me, and I wakened to

the realization that it was not my niece alone who was drawing me from the vicinity of that lighted window, but Boris, who tugged at his leash, whimpering softly. I let myself be drawn away, and followed Portia until we emerged from the path that led to Queens Boulevard, down which we went in the direction of home.

"The man's mad over her!" exploded Portia, as we regained the boulevard. "Now I can account for his exclamation. He was furious with jealousy, and his position as her chauffeur restrained him from interrupting her flirtation with Owen. In that moment he forgot himself and said what he would not have breathed, had he known that you had such a keen ear and such a good memory. Oh, I begin to see! I begin to understand!"

"The poor old woman!" I exclaimed indignantly. "Why does she remain with such a cruel mistress?"

"A serf, perhaps. Or an old nurse. Such a woman will bear all kinds of abuse from the mistress who was once a child she nurtured at her breast," explained Portia.

Just then we passed the lower end of the princess' grounds, and both dogs began behaving uneasily. Boris pulled and twisted at his leash so that I had hard work to hold him in; Andrei sniffed and whined.

"I wonder—" murmured Portia. Then, as if with a sudden thought that did not affect her agreeably, she said in a low, cautiously modulated voice, "The quicker we get home the better. The dogs are so uneasy that it disturbs me. Suppose that cage of wolves happened to be less strong than I hope it is?"

The supposition certainly was one to lend wings to our feet. I said immediately, "Let's run, Portia!"

"Can you?" answered she, as if gratified. "Come on, then!"

The dogs pulled us strongly toward home, the moment they found we were going to race them. We passed the Burnham house grounds at a run and went tearing along the boulevard toward Gilman Street in a way that surely would have ruined any reputation for dignity either of us might have hoped to sustain in the neighborhood, had we been seen. Fortunately we met no one, the night being very crisp and sharp. Too, we kept to the farther side of the street from the lamps, which are in front of the store-block only, the other side of the boulevard being as yet nothing but wide fields, except for the Burnham house.

We reached home out of breath; even the dogs were panting hard. After Portia unleashed them, they seemed quite contented to walk sedately beside us when we went up to our rooms, instead of leaping up playfully as they usually did.

Boris insisted upon sleeping on the fur rug in my room that night; perhaps because he felt we were better acquainted after our long run together that evening. As for Andrei, he accompanied Portia to her room, where both dogs usually slept nightly on a rug before her door. She left him there, and half an hour later passed my door on her way to the laboratory, wearing a black silk bungalow apron, I should call it, with a girdle of silk cord. Portia called it her working uniform.

My sleep was broken that night. Twice I waked with the uncomfortable feeling that I was not alone in the room, and turned on the electric light quickly to find nothing but the dog, which lifted wide open eyes to me. It was as if some malign influence had come with me from the old Burnham house. I think Portia looked upon it from another standpoint, for when I mentioned it to her at lunch she looked rather serious and observed that she really shouldn't have exposed me to those influences without preparation. Evidently she was of the

opinion that I was open to psychic powers that had either followed me from the princess' house, or had escaped from Portia's magical circles in the courtyard! I laughed at her solemnly, but her grave expression was rather disquieting.

"There's a great deal going on that I cannot explain to you just now, Auntie," she said earnestly. "I hope that the necessity for explanation will never come, but I fear my hope is vain."

Fu Sing came rather hurriedly into the room as we were rising from the table, with the information that Mr. Edwardes was on the wire. There was an extension in the hall just off the dining room and I could hear my niece's voice distinctly.

"Yes, this is Portia Differdale. Oh, yes, Owen. What? My dogs loose last night? Impossible! What? The princess saw them? Really, Owen, I —I don't know what to say. Aunt Sophie and I had both dogs out with us last night, on the leash, and we didn't let them away from us once."

All at once her voice sounded pleading.

"Owen, as a favor to me, please don't mention that my dogs were out last night. Deny it, please, in my name. I—I have a special reason for my request. Thank you, dear friend."

She rang off and came to rejoin me in the dining room. Her eyes were alight with the fire of purpose. Her whole bearing had become invested with a dignity, a force, that reminded me of the tone of some of her letters to me after her marriage with Mr. Differdale.

"Aunt Sophie, the Princess Tchernova has been complaining that two immense white wolfhounds were loose in her grounds last night, trying to worry her wolves in the wolf-den at the foot of her grounds."

"Impossible that she could have seen us, Portia!"

"It matters little how she knew, Aunt Sophie. I am persuaded that her selecting last night to complain of my dogs is merely a coincidence, and that she has made the accusation to cover up something, to afford an excuse for some trick she is contemplating—what, I can only imagine, and my imagination is playing me unholy tricks this morning," my niece said thoughtfully.

"But what good could it possibly do her to have it known that Boris and Andrei were loose last night in her grounds?" I persisted, very much puzzled.

"I can surmise, Auntie, but I cannot make my surmises public at this stage. It's hard to do so, but I must wait until—until something happens."

There was in Portia's voice a strange note that troubled me vaguely, yet it was nothing upon which I could put my finger, so to speak.

"One thing I must ask of you, Aunt Sophie, and that is that you keep within the walls of this place after dusk. I'm not asking this for a whim, but out of my knowledge of a terrible danger that I am now persuaded lurks about us; that is crouching, ready to spring out upon us at the moment when we least suspect it."

"I presume you will remain inside yourself, then?" I inquired, naturally enough.

"If I can manage to do so, I will," she rejoined. "Do not forget that I have learned much since I lived with you in Reading, Auntie. There are certain potent influences, certain natural laws, upon which I can depend for protection by my knowledge of them, and hence my power over them. But there—I see that you do not in the least understand me."

"I must say you are talking in riddles, my dear Portia."

"I see that I must speak plainly. There is a certain mighty power for evil that has taken up its residence

in Meadowlawn. I hesitate to name it, but it is, nevertheless, here in this community. I know how to protect myself against it, but you do not. Therefore you must remain within these walls after nightfall."

I was somewhat provoked at Portia's rather high-handed order, as I have walked alone through the loneliest parts of Reading outskirts, unaccompanied.

"If you are so anxious about me, how about Owen?" I inquired, a bit maliciously, I admit.

"Oh!" She expelled her breath sharply. "Owen I am powerless to protect! I cannot give an order to him as I can to you, Auntie. He would want to know my reasons, and I'm sure he would laugh at them when he knew them, because he couldn't understand."

Ingenuous girl, thought I to myself, how little she really knew me, if she thought I would let myself be ordered about in that manner. I made up my mind that she was letting her imagination run away with her. I intended to go to the Sunday evening service at the end of the week, and I certainly did not expect to ask for an escort of policemen to accompany me, because my niece was nervous and (perhaps) notional.

PART 6

The balance of the week passed quietly enough. Portia devoted herself again to her laboratory work nights. I did my marketing daily, occasionally running into Mrs. Differdale or Mrs. Arnold, almost invariably with their hair done up in curl-papers over which they airily wore their soiled satin boudoir caps.

Mrs. Arnold kept me fifteen minutes at Mike's one morning, telling me that Minna had been very sick with a bilious attack from eating too much candy. She retailed all Minna's symptoms; her own prompt use of the clinical thermometer; the doctor's report; Minna's recovery; ending with the remark that the next time the Princess Irma gave Minna chocolates, she (Aurora) had ordered Minna to bring them home and not try to eat all at one sitting. I received the impression, somehow, that had Minna been of a less fine and delicate constitution, she would not have been affected by the sweets, Aurora remarking that Minna was, like herself, as high-strung as a violin, this simile appearing to afford her much innocent satisfaction, as placing her on a higher plane than the rest of us vulgarly healthy mortals.

Sunday morning I told Portia that I intended to go to the evening service. She looked simply aghast.

"But I thought I explained to you," she began, when I interrupted her.

"My dear Portia, at my age I don't intend to be dictated to as to what hours I shall appear on the street. Curfew emphatically does *not* ring for me, my dear girl. If you're worrying about the Princess Tchernova's wolves, I may as well tell you that yesterday Owen took me into the grounds to show me the wolf-dens of cement and steel that she has had built, and they're quite strong enough to keep the animals inside."

Portia stared at me, her face disturbed by some deep emotion.

"I'll go with you," she suddenly decided.

"By no means interrupt your laboratory work," I retorted. "You know church services always did bore you to extinction. I won't have you going on my account."

Portia did not answer me, but I felt that she would do or say something to prevent me, and was agreeably surprized that she did not attempt to dissaude me at 7 o'clock, when I looked into the li-

brary to bid her good-bye. On the contrary, she was dressed in knickers and tweed coat, and the dogs were leashed, the leashes slipped over her left wrist. In her right hand she held the whip she had given me to carry a few nights before.

"I'm going to walk along with you, if you don't mind. I won't go in," she said.

I couldn't very well object, so she and Boris and Andrei went along up Queens Boulevard with me, very much to the astonishment of other church-going people, of whom not a few were on their way in my direction. I mentioned this to Portia, but she acted rather sulkily for her, and continued to walk along beside me. As we passed the police station —a little boxlike shanty opposite Mike's store on the boulevard— O'Brien came out and crossed the road toward us.

"Good evenin', ma'am. Did I see one of your dogs over in the Burnham house grounds last night?" he asked.

Portia straightened up and met his eyes determinedly.

"Neither last night, nor any other night, officer. I keep my dogs on the leash when they're out, and when they're not with me in the street, they're inside ten-foot walls. It was not one of my dogs you saw, I can assure you."

Her voice became hard and tense then.

"If I were you, I'd keep an eye on those wolves. Is there—is there a white one among them, perhaps?"

Her insinuation was entirely lost on O'Brien. Still, he looked at Boris and Andrei as if he would have liked to put the blame of whatever he had seen upon them. Then he went back across the road.

Portia was more than ever grave after this snatch of conversation.

"Do you see, Aunt Sophie, how the princess is trying to shift blame for something upon my noble dogs? I suppose you don't understand yet why I am accompanying you? I hope you'll never have to learn the real reason," she ended sadly.

"I think you might be doing a sensible thing to take your aunt into your confidence, Portia Delorme," I responded heatedly. "I'm sorry, but I fear it is a very small and petty feeling on your part that makes you so prejudiced against the Princess Tchernova. She may be cruel and a flirt, but I hardly believe that she is laying deep plans to get a couple of innocent dogs into trouble."

I couldn't help laughing. Portia tightened her lips and did not speak again, until she said good-bye at the church steps.

When I came out after the service I attached myself to the Arnolds, Aurora having attended with her husband. As we came down the boulevard, we became aware that something of an alarming nature had undoubtedly happened in the vicinity of the stores. There were many people buzzing about, the crowd seeming to center near the drug-store on the corner. Mr. Arnold left us and penetrated the crowd, returning after a minute with exciting news.

Officer O'Brien had been attracted by some large white animal that looked over the hedge of the Burnham place. He went over to investigate, loosening his revolver in case of emergency. It was the firing of his revolver that had attracted people to his rescue, among them Portia Differdale, with her two wolfhounds, which she had loosed from their leashes. (When Mr. Arnold said this, his wife pursed her lips with a significant look and remarked that those dogs were savage beasts that would some day attack her or somebody else.) Boris and Andrei had last been seen disappearing

into the dark of the Burnham grounds, in pursuit, so Portia declared, of the beast that had so badly torn and clawed the arm and shoulder of the policeman.

Not for a single minute did I believe that those dogs had been guilty of attacking O'Brien, but I could see how the people around considered the matter. In public opinion Boris and Andrei had already been tried and condemned. It made me furious. I pushed my way into the drug-store, although they tried to hold me back, for I was determined to get at Portia. I could see her kneeling by the man's side, bandaging his arm and shoulder, and the smell of iodoform filled the night air.

Presently she stood up, just as I entered the pharmacy. I thought for a moment that I saw a fleeting reproach in her eyes, and I remembered that it was my insistence upon going to church that had brought Portia out with the dogs.

"There's nothing else to be done but send him to the hospital when the ambulance comes," I heard her saying to Dietz, the druggist. "When the relieving officer arrives and starts investigations, I wish it to be given as my statement that my two dogs were leashed securely and I only gave them their freedom after I heard the shot, because I wanted to send them to O'Brien's assistance."

Her eyes, cold and stern, passed over the faces of the listeners, who stopped their whispering until she had passed through the crowd. She joined me at the door. We went off down the boulevard together, Portia occasionally whistling to summon the dogs, which dashed up to us just as we turned off the boulevard. I must say that I felt somehow very glad of the protection of those stanch beasts; if I were to take Portia's word and the officer's experience, then there was a third white dog abroad, not an entirely agreeable dog to meet, judging from the badly chewed left arm and shoulder of O'Brien.

We reached home without further incident. Portia let the dogs loose in the enclosure about the house and herself went down at once into the laboratory, with an implacable, set expression on her face that impressed me she knew more than she chose to tell about the happenings of that evening.

Next morning a policeman named O'Toole came to the house to interview Portia as to her share in the evening's happening. He took down her simple and direct statement without comment, but he did seem (I was present, to confirm Portia's statement as to her reason for being abroad with the dogs) vastly interested in the great ten-foot wall and in the immense courtyard with its circles and strange symbols cut into the cement paving. He was tactful enough to say nothing, although his eyes roved everywhere. I had a feeling that his reports to interested inquirers in the community would stimulate interest and speculation yet further about the Differdale house. I could almost hear him saying: "Nary a chair. Nothing but cushions to sit on."

MRS. DIFFERDALE called me on the telephone about 11 o'clock to ask if I wouldn't drop in for tea that afternoon about half past 3; she said she was having somebody else whom she thought I'd enjoy meeting. I really had no good excuse to offer, and on second thought it occurred to me that it might be as well to go, in order to put in a good word for the dogs. I was morally certain that I was being asked to satisfy the curiosity of those two women. I asked Fu to tell his mistress where I'd gone (Portia did not

appear at luncheon) and left the house about 3 o'clock.

Owen Edwardes was not in his office when I passed. I wondered if he were also out at tea that afternoon, perhaps with the Princess Tchernova. As I turned up Elm Street, a limousine flashed past me, and stopped before the Arnold house. A moment later the sinuous form of the Russian stepped out of the shining car and mounted the house steps. Then it flashed across me whom it was Mrs. Differdale had meant by someone I'd enjoy meeting.

I felt angry. I had been trapped into meeting a woman who was striking underhanded blows at Portia, trapped into meeting her in a friendly, social way. I hesitated. I was half of a mind to turn back. And then it was too late, for Mrs. Differdale, opening the door to the princess with a gushing greeting which the Russian acknowledged with her inscrutable smile, saw me and called my name. I could not very well get out of it, so I went forward with what grace I could summon on such short notice.

"Ah, it is the dear Ow-een's Aunt Sophie! *Chère* Aunt Sophie, in this wilderness how *charmant* to meet a kindred soul!"

She turned to her hostess, a pointed pink tongue moistening her lips with a lapping motion, that unpleasant little habit of hers to which Portia had referred.

"You are a good creature to have prepare this so beautiful surprize for me, *chère amie*. But let us go in; the spring air is not yet so warm."

Her trailing metallic silks made it necessary for me to maintain a respectful distance from her, for which I was not sorry. It certainly seemed that in a moment she would have put her slender arms about me, have touched my cheeks with her red lips, such did her enthusiasm appear to be over our meeting. I could not help being a little flattered; after all, I am but human, and even if I did dislike her, why should I be displeased because she tried to be nice to me?

The two Arnold girls, Minna and Alice, had been dressed in white dresses for the grand occasion, and stood with beribboned hair, waiting for the company to arrive. Minna evidently felt very much at home with the princess, for she immediately went forward with the assurance of a favorite, and seated herself beside the charming Russian, who put an arm about the girl, pinching the plump shoulders playfully.

"So you were sick eating my chocolates, Minna? *Pauvre enfant!* Another time we must not eat so much at one time. But the sweets are good for you, little one; they will make you as round and plump as a fat partridge!"

The princess' laugh rang out merrily at her comparison. Minna laughed, also, but even in her pert pride at having been singled out by the princess, the child did not forget to give me a saucy look. She certainly was a disagreeable child; there is no doubt about that.

"It is a pity Minna didn't share her chocolates with Alice," put in Mrs. Arnold, who wore the dress she had worn to the Sunday evening service, a home-made black velvet with a lace collar that was the only redeeming feature of the garment. "Alice needs to put on flesh far more than Minna."

"You are right, *chère* Mrs. Arnold."

The princess turned her attention to Alice.

"It shall be the little sister who shall have the next boxful of bonbons."

The pointed little white teeth showed in a smile that for some

reason did not give me pleasure. Instead, I felt as if something unbenign lay hidden behind the Princess Tchernova's apparent interest in the two children. I wondered if her own impulsive, cruel nature, as I had seen it illustrated that other evening when she thought herself unobserved, drew her to the two children, children disliked by everyone on the street and in the neighborhood for their bad dispositions.

"Minna shall come to my house this evening," purred the princess, "and I shall have for her a very big box of sweets, but she must give half of them to Alice."

Minna laughed throatily and threw a self-conscious look at me.

"I can't come, Princess Tchernova" (her childish tongue tripped over that outlandish name) "because my Aunt Portia's big dogs might bite me the way they did O'Brien."

"*Mr.* O'Brien, darling," corrected her mother primly.

"Your Aunt Portia's dogs *didn't* bite *Mr.* O'Brien," I put in at this point, determined not to let that story go any farther if I could prevent it.

"Oh, *chère* Aunt Sophie, what a loyal heart is yours!" sighed the Russian, turning those green shining eyes full upon me. "How nobly you try to shield the savage beasts of Mrs. Differdale! But why?"

"Why, princess? Because I've had Boris out with me on the leash and I've seen both dogs around the house every day. They sleep in my room or Portia's half the time. They're as gentle as babies and as sweet-dispositioned," I retorted.

"But then," hesitated she prettily, again with that pointed tongue lapping her deep red lips, "you must know Mrs. Differdale very well indeed, that she let you enter her so-mysterious house of many secrets. I thought you were the Aunt Sophie of my Ow-een!"

There! How was that for sheer nerve on her part? She rested her green eyes on me with a kind of amused smile flickering over her dead-white face, a smile that said much to the contrary of what her lips uttered.

"I am Mrs. Differdale's aunt, her father's sister," said I, pointedly. "And I consider myself in a position to deny spiteful rumors about such magnificent beasts as Boris and Andrei."

"The aunt of the mysterious Mrs. Differdale? A-ah, that explain everything. *Vraiment!*"

She brushed away my denial, my explanation, with a little wave of her gemmed fingers. I was furious, but there was nothing more for me to say at the moment. I took the cup of tea Mrs. Arnold offered, and sipped it hurriedly. I like my tea with sugar and lemon, and my hostess had asked if I wanted cream.

When they asked the princess she cried at once: "No sugar, please! I do not like the sweet things. Sweet things are for dear little plump girls. The plain tea, please, without anything."

"No sugar? No milk?" cried Aurora.

"Cream," corrected the mother in an undertone, looked up, caught my eye and colored.

"Nothing, kind friends, but the plain tea. No, thank you, no cakes. The doctor he do not permit sweet cakes for the poor Irma, who must do what she is order."

I made a mental note of these preferences and dislikes, thinking that it might interest Portia, who seemed to find such weighty matter in my most trifling reports.

THE Russian had removed her ermine cap and it now lay on her silken knees. The ermine cloak was thrown open, displaying the silken clinging draperies of her gown, which was girdled with a wide belt set with square diamonds surrounded with colored jewels in a barbaric and striking design. About her forehead was bound the golden ribbon I had seen that other night; the square-cut diamond twinkled and winked evilly at her every motion. Frightfully bad taste for the simple occasion, but undeniably gorgeous and attractive.

The door bell rang and Mrs. Differdale, throwing me a peculiar look, went to answer it. I heard and recognized a man's voice.

"Here's the copy of that deed, Mrs. Differdale. I rushed it through just as quickly as I could, to get it to you this afternoon as you wished."

"Do come in and have a cup of tea," urged she. "Miss Delorme's here."

"That is an inducement. Of course, I'll have a cup of tea, if I can drink it with her," laughed Owen, parting the portieres and smiling down upon us.

"Ah, *cher ami,*" cried the princess, extending a jeweled hand and monopolizing Owen entirely, so that all he could do was to bow and smile at me across the room, "what a pleasure is this so unexpected meeting, to drink the friendly tea with you in the home of these so kind ones!"

She caressed the two women with her green, glowing eyes, then turned her gaze full upon me.

"What, Ow-een? You do not pay to the Aunt Sophie your respects? Bad man! Go, at once, on the command of Irma Andreyevna Tchernova, and kneel at the feet of Aunt Sophie!"

Owen took immediate advantage of the order, which the Russian flavored with a peculiar smile at me, a smile tinctured with irony and that confidence in her own entire command of the situation that is so exasperating from one woman to another.

Mrs. Differdale poured a cup of tea for the newcomer, and I caught an interchange of glances between her daughter and herself.

"I would have invited my sister-in-law, Miss Delorme, but one doesn't exactly care to be snubbed more than two or three times," suddenly burst out Mrs. Arnold with a vehemence that spoke of her having only waited a fitting time to explode her bottled-up indignation. "Portia is so odd about going out socially," and she shrugged her shoulders expressively, if inelegantly, under the clumsy velvet.

"Oh, I'm sure Portia—Mrs. Differdale," hastily corrected Owen, coming to the defense of the absent accused with a warmth that did my heart good, "wouldn't dream of snubbing anybody, least of all her late husband's people."

"How kind are the thoughts of Ow-een!" murmured the guest of honor, an expression of deep admiration on her oval face. "Always he wishes to think the best about everybody. Ah, we are not all so noble," sighed she. For some reason, her green eyes still sought my face.

Illogical on my part, if you will, but I could have slapped the princess; her inference was by far too plain to be ignored by a friend of Portia's. I jumped boldly into the fray.

"My niece is one of the kindest-hearted, noblest women I ever had the privilege of knowing, Mrs. Arnold. She would never dream of snubbing anybody. I'm sure you've misinterpreted her unwillingness to leave her work, to which she is absolutely devoted."

"What work can possibly keep a woman as occupied as Portia, so that she never goes out socially, dear Miss Delorme? I've tried to let my daughter-in-law know that she's being frightfully gossiped about, staying in that great house all alone, doing Lord knows what."

"Whatever Mrs. Differdale is occupied in doing must be of a splendid and worthwhile nature. Anybody who has the honor of her acquaintance knows that," broke in Owen.

He glanced quickly about the little circle and caught the subtly ironical smile of the Russian. I could see that he was slightly disconcerted by it.

"Ow-een, we must all believe you too much interest' in the mysterious lady, if you defend her so warmly," accused Irma, shaking an index finger at him merrily.

Owen colored deeply. It was a betrayal for those who were able to read the signs, but I do not think anyone but myself and the argus-eyed princess translated that blush. Irma Tchernova did not appear pleased, for through her parted lips I could see those white teeth set tightly together.

"Mr. Edwardes is quite right, princess, to defend my niece, exactly as I did. When you know her better, you will jump to her defense at the first word of criticism," I exclaimed in quick refutal of the Russian's innuendo.

She turned her head ever so slowly, until her long, narrow eyes were full upon me. In the growing dusk it seemed to me that red light glinted across the oriental-looking orbs, and it disturbed me, affecting me most disagreeably. I was glad when the momentary tension was broken by Alice, who suddenly thrust out one hand and made a snatch at the bonbons on the tea-table.

Her mother slapped at the child's wrist, so that the candy tumbled helter-skelter over the embroidered tea-cloth and upon the carpet. It was the princess who intervened, her attention drawn from me to the miniature battle between mother and daughter.

"Oh, dear Mrs. Arnold, do let Alice have the bonbons! She love them so," cooed she. "And she is so thin, poor little one. If she were only like her sister, how glad I should be! But then, if she eat many bonbons, perhaps she will some time be round and rosy, eh, Alice?"

She finished by taking a handful of the candy and filling the outstretched hands of Alice, who smirked her triumph. (Odious child! I cannot help it, even today.)

I had finished my second cup of tea by this time, and felt no inclination to remain longer. I rose to my feet and observed that I had promised to be home by 5 o'clock. Owen stood up at once and offered to accompany me, if I would allow him. Then the princess interfered, with honeyed sweetness that sickened me with an intuition of her depths of deception, for I was not deceived; I knew she did not like me.

"Let me take you both in my car!" she cried with a semblance of spontaneous enthusiasm. "Then, Ow-een, we shall both carry the dear Aunt Sophie to her home, and you shall see that Irma Andreyevna Tchernova is not kidnaped on her way back! Has not Irma the wonderful ideas?"

[TO BE CONTINUED]

THE WIND THAT TRAMPS THE WORLD

by Frank Owen

Author of "Hunger," "The Man Who Lived Next Door to Himself," etc.

THE little City of the Big Winds lies on the very roof of the world, among the bleak, storm-blown peaks of the Himalayas, as if flung there by some monstrous, frenzied hand, or snapped from the tip of a whip in the hand of a giant. A grayer or more desolate spot would be hard to imagine, or a spot where the tumult of discord is more frightful.

At first John Steppling had been unable to sleep upon his arrival in the city. It was like being in another world, living in a cloudland of drifting shadows where every breath was an effort, and prolonged exertion almost a physical impossibility. He felt like an empty box, strained to the breaking point by external things, in danger of collapsing at any moment. At night as he gazed toward the stars, he felt as if he could extend his hand and pick them out of the sky, much as one might pick flowers in a fragrant garden. The sky was so intensely clear that it made him gasp, though possibly the rarefied air would have made him gasp in any case.

He had arrived at the city quite by chance during an exploring expedition in northern India. He had intended to remain in the weird little town only for a single day, and yet somehow he could not bring himself to leave it. It held a wild attraction which he could not define.

For the most part the inhabitants of the city were as poor as church mice—poorer, in truth, for they had only the roughest type of mud-thatched huts wherein to live. By occupation they were shepherds. They watched over thin and sickly flocks of sheep and goats that scraped out a meager existence from the barren, half-frozen soil. They were filthy-looking, illiterate, and stolid. In lieu of bathing they smeared their bodies with grease. Water was scarce, and they did not waste it; besides, the grease had a tendency to keep them warm. It kept them odoriferous, as well; but to people unused to the sweet perfumes of which the inhabitants of the lands lying south of them were so fond, the odor did not matter.

Among all the shepherds, Steppling could not find a single one who understood his language, nor did any of them seem to care. So long as they did not bother him, he did not bother them. Their visions were so limited that they were unable to grasp any-

thing beyond their usual scope. When a girl married, she married all the brothers of the family. Naturally, in their connubial arrangements, most of the brothers were diplomatic enough to be away much of the time.

Steppling was charmed by the spirit of mystery that hovered over everything. He longed to get beneath the mask which each person seemed to wear. These people seemed to lack personality; yet personality of some sort they must have had. When they went into their huts, did they just pass into blackness like candles blown out? Did they have any home life at all? He doubted it. Were their affections, hopes, desires, loves, all blunted? Did they ever read? It was like being in a dead city. No one approached him. No one talked to him. He seldom heard a human voice, for the voices of the people were usually drowned by the frightful screeching of the wind through the mountain passes.

Fortunately he had sufficient food with him to last him another month. When that was gone he intended to try to buy food from the natives. In what currency could he pay for it? English currency would be of little use among these savage hillsmen. He was outside British domains. The people did not value money. What they gloated over was food. Although illiterate and dull, they were able to appreciate how fundamentally useless gold is, after all.

Each day Steppling roamed for hours about the wind-swept mountain passes. He climbed to lofty pinnacles almost as sharp as needles. Sometimes he rambled over a tableland of rock so vast that the greatest giants of legend might have sat down comfortably around it without bumping elbows. Not infrequently he even ventured to walk about the native haunts of the city, where sod-thatched huts attested the poverty of the people. But the inhabitants looked at him with hostile glances as he passed. They were not pleased with his manner. They did not like his scrutiny. He, on his part, did not mind their attitude. He had traveled much. He was used to eccentricities. And yet he felt ill at ease.

One day he walked farther than usual. The city was small and the houses became less frequent, until finally he arrived at the country beyond. Even then he did not stop until he had reached a long, low house, Chinese in style. In the center was a tall pagoda, whose colorful façade was at strange variance with the drab little city through which he had just passed.

Before the doorway of the house sat an old Chinaman. He was so old, shriveled and shrunken, and his face was so crisscrossed with lines that he appeared like a mummy. Age seemed to have turned him to stone. He sat without blinking. His parchmentlike face was as brown as tanned leather. On his chin was a wisp of beard which eddied fantastically about in the sun. His lips were compressed into a thin line. His eyes looked dully out from beneath half-closed lids. His slant brows would have made his face distinctive even if it had not been distinctive otherwise. He was completely wrapped in a great cloak of alluring color. It was blue, like the midnight sky; yet sometimes, as the light struck it, it seemed to flame green. On his head was a square hat, small and black, like a great black ebony domino.

The old man sat and gazed before him. He seemed to be peering into the future, an old prognosticator crouching before his house. John Steppling stood and stared at the ancient figure. The Chinaman was so small that he resembled a child, a very old child with a wisp of beard.

Steppling was curious. Who was this ancient stranger, this man so different from all the other inhabit-

ants of the desolate city? Nothing he had beheld since crossing the mountain barriers had so completely captivated his interest. Perhaps, he thought, this man understands English. Despite the Chinaman's extreme age there was an undeniable air of culture about him.

"I wonder," said Steppling, "why they call this town the City of the Big Winds."

The old man did not stir. He seemed carved of stone.

Steppling repeated the sentence. No response. Then he repeated it again in a louder voice.

Finally the old man turned. He shook his shoulders in a peculiar manner, as if trying to escape from his reveries, from the visions which his imagination had conjured up for him.

"What do you wish?" he asked at last, in quaintly accented English.

Steppling did not know what to answer. He was surprized that the old Chinaman understood English. So long had it been since he had conversed with anyone, the question was rather a shock to him.

"If I am not presuming," he said, "I should like to know what you are gazing at so intently."

The old man's eyes were like slits. They gleamed in his rough brown face as if they were lighted lamps.

"Looking?" he repeated slowly. "Looking? I was not looking. I was listening to the ceaseless voices of the wind. Most men of earth who believe their sense of hearing is very acute are in reality stone-deaf. To listen truly is a fine art. Anyone can hear a mountain fall, but only a genius can hear the music of a flower unfolding in the sun."

He paused, and gazed off toward the jagged, knife-edged cliffs. Presently he spoke again.

"I am Hi Ling," he said. "To my house you are welcome. No human soul dwells with me. And yet there are other voices besides my own, constantly echoing through my house, for every night I open my windows so that all the great winds can blow through. They are whispering, forever they are whispering. Can you not stay with me a while?"

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," replied Steppling quickly, and he felt as if he could howl with glee. But he was careful to hide the intensity of his jubilant spirits.

With keen elation he followed the old Chinaman, who now arose and entered the house, if house it could be called, for it was a huge, ambling affair of mystery and shadows. Together they groped their way through multitudinous rooms, silent, weird, vast, through which scarcely even the faintest suggestion of daylight penetrated.

"I keep my house forever dark and shadowy," explained Hi Ling," so that it may always be in harmony with life."

"You think, then," said Steppling, "that life is clothed in shadows?"

"I do indeed," was the quick response. "The shadows of earth quite outweigh the pleasures. Over almost everyone there is a shadow constantly hanging."

As he spoke they emerged into a great room. The air was fragrant with the pungent perfumes of the East, the incense of aloeswood and musk. In the center of a black platform stood a jade-green vase. In the vase was a single branch, withered and old, a branch whose shriveled appearance suggested the gaunt face of Hi Ling. The flower, if flower there had been, had long ago fallen from it. Above the vase hung a soft-toned yellow lantern, as round and coolly brilliant as an autumn moon rising above a range of mist-crested hills.

Hi Ling prostrated himself. Lying flat on his face before the altar, he chanted in a sad monotone. For per-

haps ten minutes he remained thus. Then he rose to his feet. Without a word he walked across the room and threw open a great, heavily-draped window; then he opened a similar window on the other side of the room.

Instantly pandemonium broke loose. It was as if all the winds of earth had congregated outside that window and now came crashing through. They shrieked and laughed in a thousand fantastic tongues. The discord was frightful because it was so intense, so unrestrained. Once Steppling detected a low moan in the wind, almost a sob, but at once it was drowned by the awful laughter.

The wind crashed madly through, as if it would wreck the very building. It caught up the fragrant perfume from the musk-scented air and bore it off into measureless distances. The yellow moon-lantern swayed back and forth as ceaselessly as a pendulum. Only the jade vase remained stationary. The entire building shuddered, but still the vase did not move.

Steppling gripped Hi Ling's arm.

"What does it mean?" he cried.

He pitched his voice to the highest key possible, and even then it seemed as weak as a whisper.

"Is it a tornado, a cyclone?"

Hi Ling shook his head. His ghastly brown face looked more like that of a mummy than ever.

"It is only the wind," he said. "Listen intently. Can you not hear voices calling?"

How long the havoc continued Steppling did not know. Time had lost its importance. Something supernatural seemed to have clutched them up in its grip. He felt numb and weak, almost without the power to move.

At last Hi Ling walked across the room and closed the windows. He had to fight until he was practically exhausted to get the mad wind out again. But at last the windows were tightly barred, and peace seemed to touch the room like a caress. The yellow lantern ceased its swaying. The pungent perfume bloomed forth again.

That night John Steppling sat down to the simplest meal he had ever partaken of in his life. It was composed of rice cakes and tea. The rice cakes were as crisp as mountain air, and the tea was as pungent as it was delicious. They supped in a room lit only by a single lamp, which sputtered feebly as if protesting against the darkness that enveloped the house like a shroud.

After the meal was finished, the old man produced several pipes. They were very black and ominously small. Into the bowl of each he rolled a black, gummy pellet which he had shaped in the palms of his hand.

He held out one to John Steppling.

"Smoke?" he asked, curtly.

But Steppling refused the proffered pipe.

"I would prefer to hear you talk," he said.

"Why do you not listen to the myriads of voices in the wind?" asked Hi Ling drowzily.

"Because my ear is not attuned to catch the sound."

"You do not try. If you really listened, you could hear."

"I would rather hear your voice."

"That is foolish," declared Hi Ling. "No human voice is as softly alluring as the voices one sometimes discovers in the wind."

"Nevertheless," repeated Steppling stubbornly, "I would rather hear you talk."

Hi Ling shrugged his shoulders. He could not understand how anyone should prefer the natural voice to magic.

"What do you wish me to say?" he asked finally.

"Tell me the story of your life," replied John Steppling bluntly, "the story of the jade vase, and of the moon lantern."

Hi Ling hesitated.

"I have never told that to a living soul," he said slowly.

"Nevertheless, you must tell it to me."

"You would only smile," said Hi Ling. "You would hold my story up to ridicule, and if you did I would kill you. I should hate to do that. Never in my life has the blood of any animal been upon my hands."

"Scarcely a compliment," drawled Steppling, "to call me an animal."

He was not angry. He merely made the comment to draw on conversation.

"I meant no offense," Hi Ling assured him. "I spoke the truth, for surely, if you are neither a fish nor a fowl, you must be an animal."

"You are right," agreed Steppling. "I agree with you on every point. Therefore I think it but fitting that you tell me your story."

Again Hi Ling hesitated. But finally he acquiesced.

"YEARS ago," Hi Ling began, "I lived in southern China. I was very wealthy. My ancestors had all contributed their share to the measure of my holdings. By profession I was a horticulturist. Even though forty years have passed, the glory of my gardens is still recounted throughout southern China in innumerable quaint tales of fantasy. I raised all sorts of flowers, but I specialized in jasmine, eglantine and wistaria blossoms, particularly wistaria. I had a passion for the flowers, as great as that of any sultan for the veiled ladies of his harem. So intent was I on the contemplation of my flowers, that I seldom left the garden. Sometimes I did not even return to my house to sleep. Instead, I reclined in a charming grove at the back of my buildings, where I could hear the tinkle of a tiny rivulet, and where hundreds of gorgeous flowers breathed into the air a perfume that made me drowzy and caressed me to sleep.

"To me that garden was filled with soft-sweet voices. Flowers talk, or perhaps it would be more descriptive to say, they sing; but it is given to few people of earth to hear their wondrous melodies. Of this few, I was one.

"Day by day I studied the language of flowers. I became a hermit. As time went on I never left my garden. All else was forgotten in the contemplation of gorgeous orchids, sweet-scented jasmine and seductive eglantine. I forsook human life for floral, and in my renouncing I gained much.

"In my garden there grew a single fragile flower, orchidlike in glory, but of a species quite different from any I had ever chanced upon before. It had the soft, warm color of a tea rose, with a tint of carmine faintly suggested in the petals, which were as velvet-soft as the cheek of a maiden.

"By the hour I used to sit and listen to the sweet singing of that perfect flower. The tinkle of a fairy bell would almost seem harsh by comparison. Is it any wonder, then, that I fell in love with that flower? The wonder is that the flower seemed equally enamored of me. It glowed more beauteously as I approached it. It swayed toward me. As I put down my head to breathe of the exotic fragrance, it gently caressed my lips, and the caress was softer than the kiss of the loveliest woman.

"In time I grew to call the flower 'Dawn-Girl'. No lover of romance was more enraptured by his dear one than I. That garden became for me a sacred place. Great peace stole into my heart. The miracle of love had been performed anew. Like night and day it goes on endlessly. When love dies out on earth, then will the sun grow cold.

"I was supremely happy, but my happiness was not to last. Into my life, as into the life of every man,

there came a shadow. 'The Wind that Tramps the World' chanced to blow through the garden. He beheld the exquisite beauty of 'Dawn-Girl,' and he paused. For the first time in years he was subdued and silent. He had tramped through every country and clime of the world, over every mountain and every sea. He had beheld the grandeur of Greece and Rome and all the other fabulous cities, but never had he chanced upon any lovely sight comparable to that of 'Dawn-Girl.'

"From that day forth he wooed her ardently. Each night he came to the garden, singing fervid love lyrics. He brought her all the rarest jewels and tapestries of dazzling sunlight, which he tossed upon the ground before her. He even impregnated the cool night dew with all the famed perfumes of earth, so that as it fell upon her it would be more enticing than even the sun-glare. But it availed him not. She cared not at all for his gifts, continuing to bend toward me, as of yore. This greatly incensed 'The Wind that Tramps the World'. He who had wrecked cities, had leveled trees and stately palaces, now was impotent before this lovely girl-flower.

"His anger was frightful. He roared about the city so ferociously that people fled to their homes in fear, dreading the force of the tropical storm which they imagined was about to engulf them. The great Wind planned vengeance. One night while I slept, he whisked 'Dawn-Girl' from her branch and sped off on his old, old tramp which never ends.

"In the morning I awoke with an unaccountable fear clutching my heart. As usual, I had slept in the grove. I jumped to my feet and rushed toward the bush where 'Dawn-Girl' dwelt, but it was empty. And my heart, my life, was empty also. The shadow of doom had descended upon me. For three days I wept in the garden, and all my flower friends closed their glorious blooms in sympathy. The entire garden wept. It was a place of mourning. Some of the flowers even died of grief.

"On the morning of the fourth day I went with heavy step to the house of an old Hindoo philosopher who had lived for a hundred and forty years. He was said to be the oldest living man in the world, and also the wisest. He listened to my story. When I had finished, he told me to come to this city in the Himalayas, where all the great winds congregate. Here comes every wind of importance at some time or other. To this place, he declared, must some day come 'The Wind that Tramps the World'. When it does, he suggested that I steal 'Dawn-Girl' from the Wind, even as the Wind had stolen 'Dawn-Girl' from me.

"So I sold my garden, although it tore my soul to do so, and came up here to 'The City of the Big Winds'. I had this huge house built. It cost a vast sum of money. All the wood and material it contains had to be carried laboriously over the winding mountain passes that divide this country from India. I had two great windows built in the room of the jade vase. When these windows are flung open all the winds come crashing through.

"I have been here for forty years. Forty years have I failed, but I have not lost courage. There is always tomorrow, and tomorrow, on endlessly. Some day 'The Wind that Tramps the World' will come, and when he does, I shall be ready for him."

Thus the old Chinaman ended his story, and Steppling did not comment upon it. There seemed nothing to say. He was surprized at the story, but then he had traveled much in the world, and much had he heard that surprized him. It set many unanswerable queries floating in his mind. Was Hi Ling sane? For that matter, was he sane himself?

All through the night he sat at the door of the house of Hi Ling. He could not sleep. His brain was a cauldron of seething, fantastic thoughts. He was on the roof of the world. Much could he see that was invisible to the millions of people down in the valleys of Earth. The sky was as brilliant as a diamond-studded crown. It bore down upon him, crushing him beneath the weight of its splendor. He was breathing hard. The air was so rarefied that even in the night he could see for miles about him. From the jagged mountain peaks came the constant din and babble of the winds. On up they came from the valleys on a constant trail that is very old—nobody knows how old.

During the days that followed John Steppling felt as if he were living in a dream. The house, the moon-lantern, Hi Ling, all seemed but wraiths in a rather pleasant sleep. Hi Ling took his continued presence as a matter of course. Every night before they supped, Hi Ling opened the massive windows of the room of the jade vase, and the winds came tumbling through. Night after night the selfsame happenings were repeated and yet they never seemed to grow monotonous. Hi Ling endeavored to teach him the art of listening, but his efforts were in vain.

One night, as Hi Ling opened the windows, the blast that drove in was so intense that it shook the house as if it had been on rockers. It bellowed and roared like a lion with a thorn in its foot. By comparison, the other winds which had drifted through seemed to possess much culture. The moon-lantern swayed perilously.

Hi Ling seized Steppling's arm. His face was more cadaverous and drawn than ever. His fingers bit into the flesh like talons.

"It is the Wind," he muttered hoarsely.

How can one describe the events that followed? Hi Ling seemed to have gone stark mad. He pranced about the room with as much agility as an ape in a jungle swamp. His mouth was drawn back until his decayed yellow teeth showed like fangs. All the while he chanted a wild, weird refrain which occasionally rose above the howling of 'The Wind that Tramps the World'.

Involuntarily John Steppling shrank back into the shadows of the farthest corner of the room. He shivered. He was gripped by a crushing fear, which he could not shake from him. He knew that events of great portent in the life of Hi Ling were about to happen. For forty years Hi Ling had waited for this moment.

Fascinated, Steppling watched the actions of the old Chinaman. At times Hi Ling gyrated like a whirling dervish. Sometimes he sprang into the air as if clutching the moon-lantern. Froth foamed horribly in the corners of his lips.

As the actions of Hi Ling grew more fanatical, the intensity of the wind increased. It struck against the ears like something solid. And all the time Steppling listened intently, more intently than he had ever listened before. He thought he heard the sound of singing, in a voice sweet-low and sadder than the autumn breeze through the treetops. He strained every effort. His heart even slowed down to catch the melody, so superb was its beauty. At first he imagined that his ears were at fault, that the beautiful notes existed only in his subconscious mind, but even as the thought occurred to him, he banished it. A sound so beautiful could not be buried in his subconsciousness, for never in his life had he heard music of such haunting beauty. At that moment he became almost as mad as Hi Ling. He knew that he had heard the voice of 'Dawn-Girl', and he did not wonder that Hi Ling had

renounced all else in the world for love of her.

For a while longer the singing continued, then it ceased. It ended on a final beautiful note that was almost a moan.

With a start, Steppling came back to reality. The room was now in total darkness. The moon-lantern had been ruthlessly torn from its hanging. Now the fury of the wind increased, if increase it could. Occasionally Hi Ling uttered a cry of excitement, of anger or delight. And the wind roared back in a tremendous voice which Steppling construed as a threat. How long the fight continued Steppling could not tell. He crouched in his corner, as nervous as a newborn kitten that is snatched from its mother.

DAWN came at last. As it did so the Wind passed out of the window, to return no more. As the first shafts of the sun cut over the jagged mountain peaks and crept into the room, John Steppling gazed cautiously about him. Hi Ling lay prone on the floor before the altar. Steppling rushed to his side. He turned the limp body over, but it was useless. The chest had been completely crushed. Hi Ling had collapsed, even as an old frail house might collapse in a cyclone.

For a moment Steppling gazed down upon the face, but it was no longer old and lined with age. It was the face of a youth. There was a bit of warm red color in the cheeks, and the mouth was smiling. Steppling gazed slowly toward the jade vase. The withered branch was withered no longer. Life had come to it again, for on the branch was a flower of the soft warm color of a tea rose, but unlike any flower he had ever known before. The fragrant, cool petals were as velvet-soft as the cheek of any maiden.

Again John Steppling turned to Hi Ling, and he was not surprized that even in death he looked young. For youth had come to him in the return of 'Dawn-Girl'. Old age at best is mainly a matter of attitude.

An hour later John Steppling left the long, ambling old house. But before he went, he again lighted the moon-lantern and placed the lovely flower on the breast of Hi Ling. Even as he left he heard the sound of singing, and the notes were joyous and wonderfully sweet.

In WEIRD TALES For May

The Music of Erich Zann

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

AUTHOR OF "THE RATS IN THE WALLS"

A devil-tale of unutterable horror

ON SALE AT ALL NEWS STANDS APRIL FIRST

A Thug, a Physician, and a Mistake

TREASURE

By ALEXANDER J. SNYDER

AS THE Staten Island ferryboat neared the St. George slip, young Doctor Marsden left his seat in the smoking cabin and went out on the forward deck. His face broke into a smile of recognition as he perceived a trim, soldierly-erect old gentleman standing next the safety gates as if desirous of leaving the boat as soon as she should be berthed. Marsden made his way to the side of the older man.

"Hello, there, Doctor Fleming!" greeted Marsden. "How are things with you?"

"Fine, thank you," returned the older man. "I've just come from the Charity Hospital."

"Do you come across anything worth while there?" asked Marsden, interested in the possibilities of finding an unusual case among the dregs of humanity that ebbed through the hospital doors.

Doctor Fleming smiled at the younger man's evident enthusiasm.

"I came across something good this afternoon," he said. "Biliary case. The man was a sailor. When I got hold of him he looked like a Chinaman. By the time I was through with him I took three—"

The loud and musical clank of the windlass reeling in the hawser of the ferryboat kept the next few words from the ears of a seedy individual, who, leaning against a near-by stanchion, had absorbed the latter part of the conversation. As the gates swung aside, he strained forward to catch further words.

"—regular 'pearls'. Beauties! I have them with me," said the elderly gentleman, touching his breast pocket. "Well, I'm bound for home. I'll say good-bye before we're separated in this crowd."

The eavesdropper grinned mirthlessly as he followed the old surgeon. Bull Evans at his best had never made an attractive figure, and now, down at heel, unshaved, unshorn and ragged, he was positively repulsive.

"Gor' bli' me if 'e don't deserve it," he muttered, shaking his head to emphasize the fact to himself. "A-gougin' of charity patients that wye! Three pearls, eh? An' orf a Chink sailor! A Kanaka, more like. Hi'll keep me heye on 'im, thinks I."

Following Doctor Fleming to a Stapleton car, he boarded it and settled himself in a far corner. He pulled his faded slouch hat deeper over his eyes, and erected a discarded newspaper as a barricade between himself and the eyes of the man he was trailing. A block beyond the doctor's alighting place, he swung off the moving car and again shadowed his man.

BULL EVANS found his vigil irksome, out there in the dark, crouched beneath the window of the doctor's study. The lamp on the desk illumined a stethoscope, several books, an inkwell, and the desk-blotter on which they lay. Beyond the compass of the desk top, the rest of the room was in comparative darkness. The motionless figure of the doctor leaned attentively, eyes shaded from the

glare of the lamp, over a heavy tome lying open on the desk before him.

At last Bull Evans stiffened into an attitude of expectation. The man at the desk was pushing aside the textbook and reaching into his inner breast pocket. He brought forth an envelope, opened it, and carefully inverted it over the desk blotter. Three lustrous white objects, the size of peas, rolled out and shimmered softly in the light as the doctor poked them about with an inquisitive finger. He seemed pleased about something as he took a sheet of paper from a desk pad and jotted a few words down. Then he folded the slip, placed it with the three nacreous objects in the envelope, and gave himself up to a mental review of his tactics of the afternoon.

Bull Evans licked his puffed lips nervously. He had to have those pearls, he wanted them badly enough to do murder for them: but the modus operandi for procuring them came only after considerable knitting of shaggy brows. He turned from the window, shrugged his shoulders with a glance upward to where a dim light shone under the eaves, and with grim purpose strode to the front door. He rang the bell and stepped to one side, awaiting with upraised hand the coming of the doctor.

With measured tread the old surgeon traversed the short hall between study and front door, opened it, and seeing no one waiting outside, stepped across the threshold to the porch to investigate.

Like a snake striking, Bull Evans' blackjack descended. Pausing an instant to ease his victim's fall, and dragging him inside the hall, Bull Evans darted into the study, snatched the envelope from the desk and made a panic-stricken departure.

He crashed against a picket fence, recoiled, stumbled through knee-high growths of rank weed across several vacant lots, and furtively looked up and down the dimly lit and deserted cross streets. Panting with his exertions and pent-up emotions, he hailed a car, rode back to the ferry and crossed to the Battery. He hurried along South Street and paused before a dingy, shuttered, sailors' boarding house. Not until he had locked the door of his room, hung a filthy bandanna over the keyhole, and drawn the tattered shade to its fullest extent did he dare to examine his loot.

With avidity his grimy fingers clutched the envelope and drew forth the objects of his desire. He stared at what he saw. Could these dead-white, chalky little pebbles be the pearls he had seen the doctor examine? Puzzled, he reviewed his actions of the evening and assured himself that he had taken the right envelope—at least there had been no other in sight. To make assurance doubly sure, he looked for and found the slip of paper he had seen the doctor place in the envelope. Uncomprehending, on the first reading of what he saw, he scanned the writing again and then cursed wildly and blasphemously, for the doctor had written:

"Memo and specimens for lecture on calcareous bodies. Three gallstones removed from duct of Case 462, Charity Hospital. Note: The pearly appearance of these calculi, strongly apparent at time of operation, seems to be disappearing rapidly."

The Shadow of the Guillotine Hung Over an American Courtroom

BACK *from* DUST

By FRANK K. SHAW

THE clock was striking 3 as the patrol-wagon turned the corner and stopped before the door of the police station. The night sergeant, from his stool behind the desk, glanced out of the window.

"They've got 'em," he grunted.

"Got who?" idly inquired patrolman Russell, as he buckled his belt preparatory to "going on".

"Oh, those merry college bloods who've been trying to break the bank lately in Pete's plant over on the avenue."

"Pretty raw to pull the lads, I calls it," ruminated the policeman; "why don't you put Pete away and have done with it!"

"Never mind what you calls it," snapped the sergeant. "The chief said 'pull 'em'. What's more, it's none of your business.

As he finished speaking, the young men were jostled through the outer door and lined up on one side of the room to await their turn at the booking desk. All were in evening dress, somewhat soiled and disarranged as a result of the strenuous experience of the last hour. A few were grinning, others scowling or swearing softly. One by one they crossed the room and faced the sergeant, the latter still chafing under the implied rebuke of his subordinate. After a few crisp questions and sullen answers, duly recorded on the police blotter, each dropped back to his place in the line.

"That all of 'em?" finally growled the official, as he bent over his writing.

"One more."

At the words, uttered in a clear, indifferent tone, the sergeant glanced up quickly at the speaker, who was leisurely approaching him. He was reminded, he could not tell why, of a painting he had seen at the art gallery, entitled, "At the Court Reception." He had never acquired the vice of self-analysis, but for some reason he felt annoyed.

"And I suppose your name is Smith, or Jones, or Brown?" he sneered.

With serene grace, the prisoner drew from an inner pocket of his coat a gold-mounted card-case.

"Louis!" cried some one in the line behind him. "Don't make an ass of yourself!"

The warning was unheeded. Smilingly he withdrew from the case a card and tossed it upon the desk in front of the sergeant.

"My visiting card," he remarked blandly, "and see that you spell my name correctly: C-l-a-i-r, French, you observe."

Again came the insistent voice across the room: "But think, man—the newspapers!"

"That is my name and I have never been ashamed of it," was the cool reply. "Don't get nervous, my friend: it is beyond the power of dirty police spies to smirch it, or of the press either."

"He's gone stark crazy, officer; don't mind him!"

But apparently the sergeant did mind. His square jaws snapped together viciously.

"Here, Bill," he shouted; "conduct this 'gentleman of France' to the bridal chamber. 'Dirty police spies,' are we? We'll see about that in the morning, my young blue-blood."

The "bridal chamber" proved to be the foulest cell in the noisiest corridor of the building; but the prisoner entered it with easy dignity and seated himself on the bunk in the corner. When he was alone, he leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes.

"What imp of the devil has taken possession of me tonight?" he muttered to himself. "Behind the bars! The first of my name, I'll warrant. —No!" (Just then he recalled the portrait hanging in his father's library.) "Ah, yes; he, too, had been a Louis Clair with a prison record! 'Le Clair', they used to write it in those days."

The tale had been an inspiration to him since his knickerbocker days, the story of that gay young ancestor, the chevalier of the Reign of Terror. As they dragged him before the "citizen" judge, to be condemned to death, he had coolly taken a pinch of snuff and passed the jeweled snuff-box to his companion in the dock, with the remark: "It will kill the odor of the *canaille.*" When the enraged peasant on the bench shouted the stereotyped sentence: "Away with him to the guillotine!" Le Clair had laughed mockingly in his face.

Yes, that part of the tale had pleased him even better than the sequel: the dreary, sodden Paris streets of the early morning; the rough cart filled with the condemned on their way to die; the quick recognition, the significant look that shot between the faithful old servant in the front rank of the jeering mob, and the master standing with pinioned wrists in the prison van; the sudden wrench of those arms of steel and the snapping of the cord; the quick leap into the crowd, the swift flight down the crooked alley; the escape to England and at last the new home in America. Ah, *that* was life; that was worth the tedium of living! But this—imprisoned for gambling! Yet, after all, it was a gentleman's crime, if crime it was. Small comfort, to be sure, but better than nothing. If he must hear the clang of bolts, why could it not be in a game worth the while, where his head might be the forfeit? Never mind; he would play the petty game well, and by and by, perhaps—perhaps. . . .

A few hours later that morning, in the big building across the way, Judge Henry Durette sat at his desk in chambers adjoining the courtroom. It was the day for his weekly letter to his father up among the New Hampshire hills, and, always methodical in his habits, he dutifully began to write; but the thoughts would not come. A blast of hot air entered the open window and scattered his papers about the desk.

"Whew!" he exclaimed; "another scorcher, and vacation at the old home a full month away."

He visioned the dear old New England farm and the modest lord of the manor, Dad. What would the old chap be about today, he wondered, while his son was wrestling with the crimes and miseries of a great city? In the hay-field, of course: and he smiled at the mental picture of the short, plump figure in blue overalls, shirt open at the sinewy throat, pitchfork in hand, and shrewd, gray eyes twinkling beneath the broad-brimmed straw hat.

How bright and keen he was, too! But what an odd letter for the old fellow to write, that letter of con-

gratulation a year ago! He must look it up again. Stepping to the file he drew it out and read: "Well done, my boy; a judge at twenty-nine! We have been simple Yankee farmers for generations, but I knew it was in you. And you are not the first judge in the family, either. The first was a fine old fellow, that Judge Durette of the days of the French Revolution. No learning to speak of, but a *man*. At his word, they say, the heads of the nobility dropped from the guillotine into the basket like apples rolling into a barrel. And he was right, eternally right. The licentious, cruel, roistering aristocrats!"

"Bless the old fire-eater; he won't even kill a fowl for the table, and yet what a bloodthirsty letter! I never understood it."

He smiled as he replaced it in the file.

An hour later Judge Durette entered the courtroom and took his place on the bench. His impassive features gave no sign of the weariness, the disgust, that oppressed his very soul. The same eager crowd apparently were in the spectators' seats that had graced—or disgraced—the courtroom for countless weeks and months. The same type of hopeless wretch was in the dock. But wait; the occupants of the prisoners' benches were not all of that type today. "Ah," he mused, "has some mischievous sprite been tightening the bandage about the eyes of Dame Justice?"

"Louis Clair, stand up!" called the court clerk from his station in front of the judge's bench.

"Louis Le Clair, did you say?" absently inquired the judge in a low tone.

"No, your honor; just 'Clair' without the 'Le'," was the reply.

"O, yes; I was not paying proper attention." As he spoke, he turned toward the young man standing at his ease in the dock and looking straight at him. What an impudent, mocking smile! Where had he seen that identical picture before? The hot blood rushed through his brain. Suddenly the familiar walls of the courtroom vanished and he was sitting in a gorgeous palace of justice of the period of Louis XVI. The soiled evening suit of the respondent in the dock had become a scarlet coat, flowered waistcoat, and satin knee-breeches. He even noticed the gold snuff-box held in a white and shapely hand. A sudden fury seized him—

"Away with him to the guillotine!"

With a start he came to himself. Had he really spoken or was it a trick of his imagination? He glanced hastily about him. No, the expression in the scores of eyes looking up at him had not changed. He had said nothing, and the habitual judicial mask had screened his strange emotion. Thank God! But what had caused that vivid dream, if dream it was—his father's letter, the heat of the room, a touch of "nerves"? But the fierce anger without a cause! Was he becoming calloused so soon; was he losing all sympathy with wretched, suffering humanity? No, never would he permit that; better by far that a guilty man now and then should go unwhipped of justice. But his present duties! What was going on about him? With intense relief, he saw that the well-oiled machinery of the court was running without a jar. A police officer was just concluding a vivid description of the raid of the night before, not without certain professional embellishments.

"All these lads was gambling, your honor; I see 'em myself. And this one was the worst of the lot," he concluded.

For a moment the judge rested his head upon his hand. Could he look into those mocking eyes again? He

dared not. "The prisoner is discharged," he said shortly.

The chin of the police witness dropped ludicrously and he grasped the rail of the witness stand as if his little world of law and order were toppling into black eternity.

"Youth, first offense: a clear case for leniency," added the judge gruffly. "Let the next prisoner be arraigned, Mr. Clerk."

WITHOUT unnecessary delay, the late beneficiary of judicial favor was receiving the noisy congratulations of his fellows in a neighboring café. Sparkling, if harmless, fluids gurgled joyously from the necks of sundry bottles. Then came a chorus of questions:

"How did you manage to pull it off, Louis, old fox?"

"Has dad a pull in the Fifth ward?"

"Was it hypnotism?"

With glass in hand, Clair stood leaning against a table. The last question arrested his attention and seemed to puzzle him strangely.

"Hypnotism?" he repeated slowly. "No, not that, I think."

He raised his hand to check the laughter.

"It was strange," he continued gently, raising his glass high and peering into its contents as if to recall the picture; "it was strange. I can't express it or explain it, but, as I stood facing that man on the bench, it was another self, not I, that stood there. It was another judge, not he, that faced me. His expression did not change, I swear, yet he seemed to glower down at me with the hate and malice of a thousand years—and we were total strangers! *Then I knew that he was about to sentence me to death.* Absurd? Of course: I know it now, and I knew it then, but I believed it."

"Odd freak of yours, that," said someone in the room. "He isn't a bad sort at all, Judge Durette."

"Judge Durette!" As he gasped the words, Louis Clair's face became as bloodless as the marble slab upon which he leaned. The glass slipped from his shaking fingers and crashed on the floor.

"What is it?" cried a startled voice. "You know him, you recall the name?"

"I never heard of him!"

"But why—?"

"God help me, I do not know," he whispered.

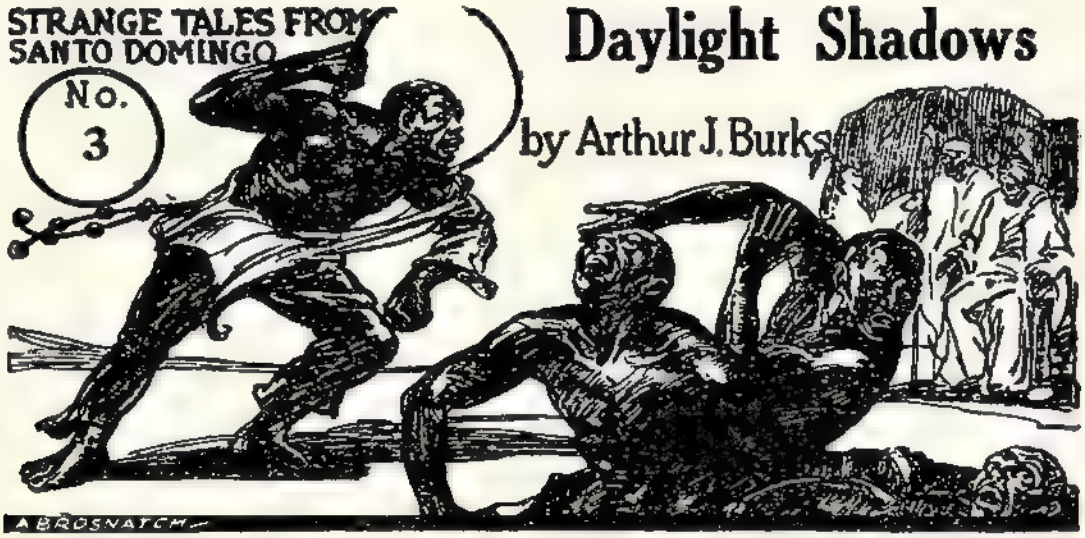
IN WEIRD TALES NEXT MONTH

THE LIP

By ARTHUR STYRON

A Remarkable Tale of Insanity

ON SALE AT ALL NEWS STANDS APRIL FIRST



Daylight Shadows

by Arthur J. Burks

Author of "Luisma's Return," "Thus Spake the Prophetess," etc.

I HAD been told by a more experienced officer than myself that only a fool would attempt the passage of Neiba Desert after 10 o'clock in the morning. No white man, afoot, could bear up under the terrible heat, and there are few Dominican mules that can carry with ease a bulk as great as mine. Neiba Desert, in the heart of the tropics, is a hundred feet below the level of the sea.

But what youngster ever listened to the advice of his elders? I never had, and because I did not in this instance, I qualified for the first rank among fools.

We, a tenderfoot pharmacist's mate and myself, left Barahona at 5 o'clock in the morning, intent on reaching Las Salinas in time to make the crossing in the cool of the morning. We rode a pair of Dominican mules that were too small for us. But, even so, we should have made it, had we not tarried overlong in Cabral to listen to the raucous cries of the natives in the marketplace—until it was 8 o'clock by the sun.

We pulled out finally, after breakfasting on Dominican coffee, which is nectar fit for the gods after one has acquired the taste for it. We reached the branching of the road at about 9, and it was 10 o'clock exactly when we gave the mules their last chance at water just Neibaward from Las Salinas. We filled our canteens there, after which we gave our mounts a breathing space ere we struck out through the thorn-tree studded waste of sand.

I shall never forget that momentous first glance toward Neiba. Just behind us to the south were the broad reaches of the Bahoruco mountains, while away ahead we could see the blue outline of the distant Cordilleras. We could not see the town of Neiba because of the fringe of palm-trees which hide her from view, even as they disclose her whereabouts. Even at that distance, which must have been very great, we could see that the palm-trees bowed and beckoned to us, as if they urged us ahead with promises of hospitality upon arrival.

We started blithely on our way. My companion was a pharmacist's mate in Uncle Sam's navy, and we talked of some of his queer experiences in hospital wards during the war, I remember. This was during the first hour, only, of the crossing. There was a dim trail through the sand, and the dust came up in clouds, filling our

eyes and nostrils with fine layers of the stuff. The heat was almost unbearable. It must have been 104 degrees Fahrenheit even then. And we had just started. The palm-trees looked no nearer. The Cordilleras were just as blue as at first. Our talking died away to oppressive silence. We drank often from our canteens, and we did not try to spare the water. Those palm-trees looked much closer than they really were, although we had been warned that their beckoning was treacherous—like that of *Die Lorelei*. Our water was gone before we had half completed the passage.

Two hours more.

Half an hour after the water gave out we were slumped low in our saddles, our shirts pulled up about our necks to keep the heat from frying our brains, and our mules were creeping along with their heads hanging almost into the trail. They were very tired, and the dust had built gray coats on their sweat-drenched hides.

My companion, who had been but a few weeks out of the states, rode along without a glance to right or left. He was feeling the heat more than I was. It was tough on him. Another hour passed, with the palm-trees seemingly no nearer. I saw that his gaze was fixed steadfastly upon them. Once when their fronded heads bowed and beckoned to us, he raised his hand and waved, as if he answered their silent greeting. He listened. Then he laughed—a laugh that was as dry as footfalls in the leaves of autumn. I knew without looking that his lips had begun to crack and that his tongue was swelling in his mouth.

I BEGAN to see queer things. A lizard scrambled from beneath a thorn-tree and stopped in the trail ahead, his yellow throat moving in the heat like a bellows. Before my eyes, as we approached, he swelled in size until he was not a lizard, but an iguana—not an iguana, but a dinosaur—a monster. He did not move as my mule approached, but ducked his serpentine head as if, like the ostrich, he would hide it in the sand. He kept on swelling until, just as the mule's hoof must strike him, he covered the entire road, and his body stretched away in the desert on either side. But the mule never noticed. Nor did my companion. The mule's foot struck without a jar. In a flash the monster vanished. I looked back after we had passed. There was only a greenish smear in the footprint, which was rapidly filling with dust. I laughed, loud and long, but my companion did not turn around.

When I had looked back I had lowered my head so that my gaze was upon the ground beneath. I noticed a strange thing. Neither myself, my companion, nor the mules, cast a sign of a shadow upon the sand beneath us! I pinched myself and it hurt. I struck spurs to the mule and he grunted dismally. Real enough. But why were there no shadows? I bent over to look beneath the animal I rode. Still no shadow! The pharmacist's mate looked at me then. We laughed in each other's faces and neither knew why the other laughed.

My mule stopped. His sides were moving rapidly out and in—out and in, as if he could not stop them. His breath came groaning from drooling lips; slobbers made cakes of sand and dried at once, leaving little hills like the workings of certain kinds of yellow-jackets. I knew at once that the mule could proceed no farther. I alighted and attempted to pull the creature along. Not to be done.

My lips were cracked and bleeding. My tongue protruded from between sand-gritted teeth. I addressed the pharmacist's mate in a weird kind of croak:

"Go on to Neiba, and tell the *guardia* to come back out for me. Your mule can make it. You never could do it afoot if I took your mule.

I don't know that I can do it myself, but my chances are better than yours. Beat it!"

"Just so, sir. Certainly! It was to me that they beckoned, anyway. They have no welcome for you in Neiba. The greeting was for me."

What was the fool talking about? And why did he laugh like a croaking raven as he set spurs to his mule and moved on up the trail? I stood and watched him until he mingled with the heat waves, vanishing into the shimmering stuff like a creature from the pit.

ONCE more I tried to pull the mule along. It was no use, but my knees were knocking together and I was as weak as a cat before I gave it up and tied my mule in the dubious shade of a thorn-tree, where it was hotter even than out in the sunlight.

I started on afoot. I came to myself at the end of a hundred yards or so, to see that I was heading back toward Las Salinas. That would never do! Two hundred yards of needless walking when I needed every ounce of my strength!

The mate would never reach Neiba, I felt sure. He was already crazy from the heat. He'd be bound to try a short cut and leave his bones to bleach in the sun. I had to make it on in. I need not look for the arrival of *guardia* soldiers. The pharmacist's mate would never get in to tell them. He was too crazy.

I had to laugh when I thought about it. Then I looked down and turned clear around once, looking for my shadow. Not a shade of a shadow! Pretty good, that, I thought. Shade of a shadow! Ha! ha! Carefully, solemnly, I raised one foot at a time, looking under each one. No shadow.

I started on again, saying "Eeny, meeny, miny, mo" to be sure I got started in the right direction this time. Queer how I had gotten turned around while turning around looking for the shade of my shadow! Ha! ha! ha!

I stumbled along, cursing to myself because my scuffling feet stirred up dust which flew into my nostrils. I didn't hear myself curse. My tongue was so big now that no sound could get out. But I should be all right in a brace of minutes. There was a sparkling stream crossing the trail right up there ahead of me. Queer, too, that—the officer who had given me that crazy advice had told me that there were no streams between Las Salinas and Neiba. But I could see it, couldn't I? Sure! I stumbled along until I reached its very edge, flung myself down and pressed my lips to its cooling surface. They came away coated with burning sand, some of which worked past my lips, past my swollen tongue, and into my mouth. I tried to expel the grains, but there wasn't enough moisture in my mouth. I had to stumble on with the gritty grains scratching me terribly. Somebody had placed the stream there as a kind of funny joke; but whoever had done it had hauled it away just when I would have slaked my thirst! Very poor joke.

I looked back at the mule. He brayed at me with the note of a croaking raven. I turned and looked at the palm-trees that beckoned me on to Neiba. I could almost hear the whispering of the fronds. But the Cordilleras were as blue as ever. Where was that dratted pharmacist's mate? Damn him!

I looked once more for my shadow. No shadow. Then I knew that I was nearing the end. The thought brought me back to a semblance of reason for a few minutes. I was suffering the torments of the utterly damned. How many a poor fool had left his bones to bleach in this desert in days gone by? There must have been many of them, surely. But not if they remained on the road. Someone would surely come along and find them. Only the poor

fool who wandered off the trail left his bones to bleach. I had better sense. I would stick to the trail.

But where was the trail? I saw trails now which led to every point of the compass. Follow the beckoning of the palm-trees? There were palm-trees all around me. But some of them were thorn-trees! I couldn't for the life of me tell the difference. Eeny, meeny, miny, mo! Straight ahead. I looked for my shadow again and could not find it.

But all at once there were shadows all around me! But where were the bodies that caused the shadows? The substance which was the father of the shadows? I saw not a single upright creature. Only those shadows, flat on the ground, that danced and eddied around me. The shadows of human beings! But where were the human beings? I looked more closely at the shadows. Arms, legs, heads, bodies—all were there. But the substance which caused them? None to be seen. No solid bodies. The shadows were whole and perfectly formed. But stay! They weren't entirely whole. In each and every shadow there were three bright spots, marking two eyes and a gash of a mouth to each shadow, where the sun shone through the substance I could not see!

I STOPPED dead in my tracks as an idea came to me. The shadows, which were increasing at an alarming rate, paused, radiating out from me like the spokes of a wheel, and thumbed shadow noses at me with shadow thumbs. My idea was this: I, who was human and alive, cast no shadow. Therefore these shadows must be the shadows of those who had ceased to exist. It was perfectly reasonable, like a proposition in geometry. The living cast no shadow, therefore that which cast a shadow must be dead and gone! It followed, as a corollary, that I should cast a shadow only after I had died!

Queer about this desert. Lizards that were iguanas; iguanas that were dinosaurs; streams that did not exist: shadows of the desert dead! Why did the shadows gather about me? Were they inviting me to join the ranks of those who were able to cast shadows? Were the dead who had died in Neiba asking me to join them? Or were they taunting me because they knew I must join them whether I willed it or no?

"But you haven't got me yet!" I croaked to the shadows. "I am still of those who cast no shadows! See? Look about me and see if there be even the sign of a shadow!"

And I looked down to satisfy myself that I spoke truth.

My God! I didn't cast a shadow, no; but right where my shadow would have been had there been a shadow was a thin pencil mark of darkness, as if someone had drawn a black line about my shadow's outline and then jerked the shadow away! Like that practical joker who had jerked the stream away when I would have slaked my thirst.

I paused for a moment, studying that weird outline, while the real shadows kept thumbing their noses at me. There was a heavier shadow among those real shadows—the shadow of a fat man who had died. Fat men are said to be jolly. I looked at the fat man as I recalled this. The spot where the right eye would have been, had it been a person instead of a shadow, closed slowly and strangely, in a terrible and horrifying wink! The bright eye opened again and the bright gash of a mouth widened into a terrible, ghastly, silent grin!

I screamed and ran, closing my eyes to shut out the shadows. I fell to my knees and slumped forward on my stomach, crawling slowly ahead through the scorching sand. It burned my hands and body. Hellfire rushed into my nostrils from the desert floor. I dragged myself to my feet, then fell

and lay still for a long time. I opened my eyes to see that the shadows were dancing in hellish glee upon my chest! All thumbed their noses except the fat man. He winked, and grinned with that bright gash of a mouth.

I arose and looked at my own shadow. I could call it that now, for there was only the bright outline of a miniature of myself, within that other outline of black. I was almost a shadow. I closed my eyes again and stumbled ahead.

SUDDENLY I met three Dominican women riding toward me on three burros piled high with gourds. Filled with water, I knew, for the gourds were dripping precious moisture upon the gray coats of the burros. I raised a hand beseechingly and pointed to my swollen tongue. The women crossed themselves and shied away from me. I tried to run toward them and the burros bolted. One of the women called back to me:

"Go back to Barahona, or on to Neiba, if you wish water! There is more than you can drink, ever, in either place!"

Surely, that was truth! Stupid of me! I would go on to Neiba. That's where I had started for, wasn't it?

I walked on, stumbling, falling, crawling forward on my stomach like a snake—rising and going forward with feet that were heavy as lead. Molten lead.

Where were the palm-trees? I could not see them. And this trail was not a trail at all. It was the snaky trace of a lizard! No, of an iguana! Or a dinosaur. I don't know. I'll follow it anyway. My shadow tells me that there isn't much time. The miniature within the outline isn't a miniature any more—just a weirdly shaped spray of blinding light, growing smaller. And there are other shadows all about me—countless numbers of them.

What is that up ahead there? Another stream? But I shan't be disappointed if it isn't; I'll have a look anyway. I'm going in that direction. I stumble into the stream. It is real! I feel its coolness creep up over my shoetops, creep into my shoes and harden the molten lead which compose my feet. I fall face downward in the stream and drink—drink—drink! The water is green because the cattle use it overmuch, but it is nectar for all that—nectar superior to the best Dominican coffee.

I crawl out on the bank and look at my shadow. There is only a spot of light in its center now. To be cheated, after I have reached water at last!

But whence come these other shadows? They are shadows of black soldiers, and they are upright instead of flat on the ground. I am not to be fooled. I'm all turned around, I know that, but I am not crazy yet. They look at me queerly, hesitantly, as they approach. One man, a sergeant, is in the lead, and he is running toward me with swift strides. He stops just before me and his shadow blots out the spray of light which is all that stands between me and the desert dead.

"Curse you! Curse you!" I cry, slashing out with my fist; "would you relegate me to the shadows after I have slaked my thirst and am able to go on! I don't want to be a shadow, I tell you!"

My fist takes him in the mouth, and I see the red blood start as total darkness closes around me, filling the world itself with shadow.

I CAME to myself in the *guardia* barracks at Neiba. The sergeant sat opposite me, wiping his lips with a soiled handkerchief.

"Where am I?" I asked feebly. "Did the pharmacist's mate get in all right? How did I get here?"

He smiled at me and answered in Spanish.

"You are in Neiba. Yes, he got in all right. We brought you in, after tracking you halfway to Lake Enriquillo, toward which, leaving the trail, you were wandering. You were unconscious, flat on the desert floor, and licking up sand with your swollen tongue, which, sticking through between your teeth, was so big that it wouldn't carry the sand into your mouth! It kept rolling off your tongue and you mumbled to yourself as if cursing. I caught the words 'cattle' and 'shadows'. Then you hit me in the mouth. That's all!"

It was enough.

Note.—"The Sorrowful Sisterhood," No. 4 in this series of "Strange Tales From Santo Domingo," narrates one of the weird experiences of the Dominican bandit, José Espinosa. It will appear in next month's WEIRD TALES.

THE DARK POOL

***By* FRANCIS HARD**

It lies beneath a sunless sky,
    Deep in the entrails of a bog:
Gnarled willows hide it, lifting high
    Their tortured arms; and never frog,
Nor newt, nor toad, nor dragonfly
    Dare come within its deadly fog.

For evil spirits there are bound
    Within its slime: an impious rune
They chant, nor is there other sound
    But wicked whispers, out of tune,
As un-dead *things* that there lie drowned
    Obscenely mutter to the moon.

The nightshade petals in its dank
    And fetid vapors darkly bloom;
Black orchids on its silent bank
    Insinuate a sick perfume;
And from its depths ooze up the rank
    And gassy stenches of the tomb.

For potencies of witchcraft fell
    Are buried in its slimy bed,
And deathly blasphemies that well
    And bubble up with grisly dread.
From *things* that in its waters dwell—
    From *things* that died, but are not dead.

THE HAUNTING EYES

by Eudora Ramsay Richardson

Author of "The Voice of Euphemia"

OUTSIDE, the winter wind howls its way across the prison walls and beats against my casement. The cell is cold and damp. The smoking lamp intensifies the shadows that lurk above me, beneath me, about me. The march of the death watch past my door is the only sound within this dark, dank hole. I am alone, alone; but it is not loneliness I fear. It is Lucretia—the Lucretia I loved, betrayed and murdered. God! I feel the grip of her power reaching from the world beyond, wreaking its terrible vengeance. Her eyes, those limpid, mild blue eyes of hers! How they search my very soul tonight! How they have always searched me, accused me, cursed me! Lucretia! I must write to break the spell. I must write or I shall go mad, mad; and it is madness I fear, not the death that awaits me. Lucretia, Lucretia, spare me! I have told it all. I will tell it again. Will that not be atonement sufficient? God in heaven, who gave me the sinister power that wrought my destruction and Lucretia's, hold off for tonight the spirit that possesses me! Let me forget! For a moment let me forget!

While I write, I am calmer. Lucretia does not reach me. How many times by the ghastly light of this lamp I have written the story, to destroy it the next morning! At daybreak tomorrow death will bring surcease; so tonight I write for the last time, and the record will remain to purge my soul of its guilt. I write to speed by the hours that must pass before I am led to the death chamber and set free from this anguish. What lies beyond I do not know, but it will not be this. Merciful God, it cannot be this!

What a simple, happy thing was that youth of mine spent in the little town that progress passed by! In the center of my life, as far back as I can remember, was Lucretia. A boxwood hedge separated our ancestral homes, but nothing came between our love. Here in the midnight quiet of this cell, it does not seem possible that the man who committed the crime for which I am to die at daybreak could once have been the boy who loved Lucretia with all the purity of his boy heart. And yet in that boy lay the roots of the power that has brought me to this wretched end. All my life I had loved and

feared those eyes of Lucretia, but little did I dream back in boyhood days that they could drive me to the direst crime man can commit and then return after death to condemn me.

It was the coming of Franz Larue, the hypnotist, that marked the turning point in my life. How well I recall now the incident! Lucretia and I went together to the hypnotist's entertainment and sat in the third row, that we might discover what trickery the man employed.

The program followed the lines of the hypnotist's usual performance, but to our town it was absorbing and mysterious. From the beginning I felt within me gropings toward a power of which I had never before been conscious, though I had always known I was different from other boys, singled out by the gods, as it were, for a higher destiny. During the evening I became convinced that I could hypnotize, and earnestly I watched every movement of the man before me. At length Larue fixed me with his piercing eyes, and said, "Young man, you have the genius. I bow before ability I cannot equal. Come to the stage."

I went, impelled not by the hypnotist's will but by a sense of my own power. A lad I had known all my life was on the stage, ready at the entertainer's command to perform antics for the amusement of the spectators.

"Hypnotize this subject," Larue urged. "You can do it."

I fixed my eyes upon the boy, and in a moment I knew that his will was yielding to mine. Soon he was completely in my power.

That night marked the fatal beginning. Before leaving, Franz Larue gave me books to read and told me where to order others.

"I charge you, my boy," the man said, "to use wisely this God-given gift. It can mean much for good. It may mean much for evil."

I laughed then, but now, as I look back over the agony of spirit I have endured, over the misery I have brought others, and the ghastly horrors that have tormented me, I weep to think how lightly I took Larue's counsel. "God-given," Larue called the gift. Devil-sent it must have been, bestowed by all the furious fiends of darkness.

After the boy I found on the stage, my next subject was Lucretia, and naturally so; for what could be more fitting than that she should put herself in the hands of the one who through the years was to be the custodian of all the love she had to give? But as I hypnotized her, I feared those eyes of hers; feared them often until my very soul grew cold. Nevertheless, as I went deeper into the mysteries of the science, it was Lucretia upon whom I demonstrated each new thing I learned.

"Why, dearest," I remember saying about six weeks after the visit of Larue, "I can hypnotize you with a look, with a glance."

The girl's clear blue eyes met mine. "I would not yield my will like this to any one else," she said, "but it is bliss, George, to know that I am so utterly yours."

"May I always be worthy of the trust!" I said, as I pressed Lucretia against my heart.

That was one George. Another from the depths of degradation sits shivering in his cell, writing, writing lest the spirit of Lucretia come to tear asunder the tattered remnants of his mind, lest those eyes of Lucretia pierce the darkness to freeze the very marrow of his bones.

Because of me, Lucretia developed an interest in hypnotism and zealously read the books I ordered. Though lacking in talent, she learned enough to hypnotize a weak subject,

or a strong subject that would yield his will to hers. Finally, however, to my amazement, she met me one night in tears.

"George," she pleaded, "give this up. As I read, I become terrified by a premonition of trouble. Hypnotism is dangerous, and I begin to believe that it is also wrong."

In vain I tried to soothe her, to make light of her fears.

"It's no use," she said, "I feel the power growing within me. I am through with it forever."

I know now that Lucretia's sudden reversal was a prescience of the double tragedy to follow.

It was not long after that night that I felt the stir of a new ambition. I could achieve something more than our town had to offer. When I told Lucretia of my thoughts, she urged me on.

"Go to the city, George," she said. "I can wait until you return for me."

I went. At first came disillusion. The positions I held seemed to offer no chance for promotions, and, full of discontent, I passed from one kind of work to another. At length, I fitted into a vacancy in a real estate broker's office, doing clerical work that I detested. One Saturday afternoon, as I sat poring over my books long after the other clerks had gone, from the president's office I heard voices and from time to time snatches of conversation. The two heads of the firm were discussing their inability to get hold of some valuable property they wanted.

"He won't sell at any price," I heard. "I tell you argument does no good. We're beaten, that's all."

Into my mind an idea sprang full grown. Why not capitalize the hypnotic power that was mine? If I could get permission to try, I could make that sale. Permission to try! Why, through hypnotism I could secure that permission. I waited until the junior member of the firm went out, and then I entered the sanctum of Henry Demar, the president.

"I couldn't help," I said, "but hear that you are trying to make a difficult deal. I know that I can get the property for you."

The man looked at me in amusement.

"You, boy!" he laughed. "Run along and play marbles."

I fixed my eyes upon him and began talking slowly and monotonously. At first I held the man's eyes because my audacity interested him. In a moment, I was getting control of his mind, and I knew that I could command him as I chose. The upshot was that I got the information necessary and a signed check for the first payment to be made on the property.

That afternoon I found the man who had so tenaciously held the wanted property, consummated the deal and delivered the papers to my employer. As I look back, I know in anguish of soul that hereupon began not only my business success but also the disintegration of my character. I was at once elevated to a position of importance, which led soon to membership in the firm.

I could not be happy, however, for I could not forget the eyes of Lucretia. Constantly they reproved me, constantly searched the innermost depths of my mind. Did ever living woman possess such eyes as did Lucretia? Had it not been for those eyes, and I say it tonight in shame, I think I should have felt no remorse. It seems strange to me now that my victims after their defeats gave so little trouble. One or two protests came, it is true, but in the face of signed contracts, they amounted to little. In the majority of cases,

pride sealed the lips of those from whom I had wrested cherished possessions.

RETURNING to my room after my first triumph, I felt my spirit strangely remote from Lucretia's. Day by day my interest in this girl I had always loved lagged. I wanted to forget her, but those eyes followed me accusingly, menacingly. I was becoming a considerable man in the city. Lucretia was a girl molded to the life in the village in which she had always lived. Why should the affair continue? I stopped writing, and made no explanation. Letters came from Lucretia. Everything depended upon my forgetting her; so I burned those letters unopened. In time I who had never known failure would banish from my mind her haunting presence, from my memory her eyes.

I boarded next to an old church, the quaintness of whose cemetery attracted me. Though Lucretia had my address, it did not occur to me that she would come to the city. Consequently, when at dusk I returned one spring evening, I was amazed to find her lingering near the gate of my boarding place. She was still beautiful, still appealing, and I was surprized to find that the old desire for her was not dead. I wanted to feel her soft cheek against mine, to hold her close, and hear the quickened beat of her heart.

"Oh, George," she said, coming toward me with outstretched hands, "I was so afraid something had happened to you."

"Come into the churchyard," I said; "we can't talk here."

I led her through the half closed iron gate, into the cemetery fragrant with magnolias and cape jessamine.

"I have been so unhappy," she said. "My father died a month ago, and now I have no one. What has been the matter, George?"

"You'll understand when I have had a chance to explain," I said. "Can't you trust me a little longer?"

Her hand curled into mine, and she was silent. What a soft, sweet thing Lucretia was that night! She came of the race of women made to be loved—and I loved the velvet of her cheek, the curve of her breast, the cling of her body against mine. Beyond this, I had throttled my ability to love. That night alone with Lucretia in the gathering dark of the old cemetery, I was conscious only of the passion that surged through me. I wanted Lucretia, and through hypnotism, and hypnotism alone, I could at that moment gratify my desire. I looked into her eyes and for a moment saw mirrored there the man I might have been. Then I drew down the lids and kissed them. Lucretia and I alone in the deserted cemetery! Mine, mine! In ecstasy I strained her to me. Oh, the blissful sweetness of her! Even tonight I thrill again as I remember the warmth of her body against mine. And her eyes were closed, closed and unseeing!

Oh, demons that possessed me, how could man be capable of so foul a deed? Or, having robbed Lucretia of all that she held most dear, how could I have taken her, still under the spell I had cast, to the train and sent her home with assurance that soon I would come for her?

WHEN Lucretia awoke from the trance, full realization of what had happened must have come to her. Months passed, and I had no word. I was glad, and yet a strange fear would creep into my mind, a fear born of those eyes that would not leave me, that would not let me forget. There were times, too, when the aching longing to have Lucretia

again in my arms grew almost more than I could bear. I was not sorry I had wronged her. I was glad, glad for the moment of happiness I had had. I did not care whether or not she suffered. My whole being cried out for Lucretia—again, again—and then those eyes would come with their endless, senseless accusations, those eyes I was beginning to hate with a fiend's unreasoning rage.

There was nothing I could not accomplish. Perhaps, perhaps by mental telepathy I could bring Lucretia back to me, back where she would come always at my call. Other women I found unsatisfying. I wanted Lucretia. Day after day, night after night, I willed that she should come, willed with all the intensity of the mind I was convinced was more than human.

Then one night I returned to my boarding place to find Lucretia at the gate again awaiting me. She had come to answer my call, I thought triumphantly. Miles of space were as naught before my power.

"George," she said, "you have wronged me, and you have wronged another yet unborn. I have come to make you atone."

In derision I laughed and felt no pity. To make me atone! Me the unconquered and unconquerable! Through my laughter I heard Lucretia still speaking.

"I have been here several days, long enough to know the deceptions by which you have climbed the ladder, the wreckage that lies along your path. Others hate you, but I alone know the means you have employed. If in one week you have not begun to make amends, in justice to those you have injured, I will expose you."

Lucretia's eyes were upon me, driving me to frenzy, her innocent, blue eyes that told of the wrong I had done her. What could I do but close them forever? I must act before it was too late. I must hypnotize Lucretia. I must silence her. Looking at her, for the first time I felt the wall of her resistance.

"Don't try that," she cried. "You cannot do it now."

Lucretia turned and was about to flee when I caught her by the wrist and drew her toward the cemetery. Within the enclosure we were alone. Against her defiance, I could place my months of study and experience. I would succeed. I must. Twisting her hands behind her until she winced with pain, I held my face close to hers.

"Look at me," I commanded. "Look!"

After minutes that for Lucretia must have been fraught with physical agony as my grip tightened, her eyes, flaming with defiance, met mine.

"You cannot do it," she said over and over, first with emphasis, then more and more faintly. Finally the words died on her lips, and again Lucretia was in my power. Soft southern breezes blew through the magnolias, soothing my senses with the fragrance of roses and wild honeysuckle. Again I was alone with Lucretia. Mine, mine, was this Lucretia whose body I loved, this Lucretia whose eyes fascinated and terrified me. Once again I crushed her to me. Once again I knew the joy of possessing her. Foul fiend that I was, once again I defiled her. Then in very madness I kissed for the last time her lips, her eyelids, her cheeks, her neck. I could not possess her again. I must destroy her. In the name of sanity, what else was I to do? From the churchyard I led her toward the river. It was dark, and I passed no one I recognized. When we reached the iron rail of the battery, I looked into the waters below. For a moment I shuddered, but only for a moment. What else was I to do, in heaven's name, what else?

"When I have been gone ten minutes," I said, "jump over the rail. Now say this after me: 'I am going to jump.' Say it again and again."

Lucretia repeated the words in a slow monotone. "I am going to jump. I am going to jump."

As I walked rapidly home, the sound of those words followed me like a dirge, the last words I shall ever hear from the living lips of Lucretia: "I am going to jump. I am going to jump." Tonight, how those words scream within my cell, how they reverberate down the echoing prison halls! My words on the lips of Lucretia, my words—Lucretia's death knell and my own! Tonight I would gladly give all my worldly success for the chance to call them back.

Some days later Lucretia's body was found, and, without identification, it was buried. I was safe, safe! Instead of remorse, I felt complete satisfaction. I was not merely clever. I was invincible. My hypnotic power rendered men my helpless prey. Indeed, there seemed no height of human achievement I could not scale. In the city no one knew I was a hypnotist. The town of my youth where I had made on the night of Franz Larue's visit my public demonstration of power did not know of my pursuance of the study. Besides, the town was remote and isolated. Safe, safe! In my very exultation of spirit I went my iniquitous way.

But at night alone in my room the eyes of Lucretia would come to haunt me. Sometimes when I sat bending over my desk I would feel them above me. At length everywhere the eyes of Lucretia! Increasingly their ghastly presence marred my happiness. Now I knew that Lucretia's eyes were not mortal, but celestial—the eyes of an angel, not of a woman. I feared, I feared, but through my fear came the assurance that I, the invincible, could conquer the spell they cast about me.

One month to the day after the drowning of Lucretia I came home from my office at the accustomed time. The day had held a new victory in the form of a property transfer that brought many thousands into the coffers of our company. Favorite of the gods I was, a superman indeed. Passing the old cemetery, I entered. It was pleasant to return to the spot where had been enacted two crucial scenes in my career. Here had stood Lucretia. Here I had stood. How well I remembered the night I had betrayed her! Without remorse I lived again with a return of the moment's ecstasy the touch of her body, the cling of her lips to mine, the fragrance of her shoulders, as I buried my face in their velvet curves. Demon that I had become, I was glad that I had had those moments of love's consummation, glad that the victim of my base passion had gone whence she could not return to taunt me.

As I stood thus engaged in pleasant retrospect, suddenly I knew that Lucretia's eyes were upon me. Then there came to my ears, as though wafted on the wings of the night, a memorable voice. Was madness assailing me? It was Lucretia speaking those futile words with which she had fought my unconquerable power.

"You cannot do it. You cannot do it," the voice repeated over and over, and, instead of growing weaker, the tones gained each time in strength and resonance. As the monotonous repetition continued, I stood horrified. Suddenly I was aware not only of a voice but also of a presence. Lucretia was with me, bending above me, closer, closer. Infernal horrors! The spirit of Lucretia was accomplishing that in which the living woman had failed.

Lessons I had helped her learn she was using from the spirit world to entrap me, to enslave me. I was being hypnotized here on the spot where twice I had hypnotized Lucretia. There were, however, no hands to hold me in their iron grip. From the churchyard I fled to my room, locked the door and remained all night in an agony of fear. The next day, instead of going to my office, I went to the country, dreading the return of darkness, haunted by forebodings horrible, torturing. Before dusk I returned to my room, having approached the house from the side that did not lead by the cemetery. In my room, however, as I sat beneath the glare of lights, there came to me no sense of safety. I do not know just what time it was that I heard again the dirgelike voice of Lucretia.

"You cannot do it. You cannot do it," came the ghastly chant, and I felt in the room a pervading presence, a force against which I battled in vain. "Confess, confess!" I heard in terror. "Repeat these words, 'I murdered . . .!' "

With a gigantic effort, I threw open the door, sped down the steps and out into the night. Like a madman I ran through the streets of the city, disdaining public conveyances. Almost swooning from exhaustion, I reached at last my office building, and, fearing to encounter the operator of the lift, climbed the eight flights of stairs that led to the suite occupied by our firm. Not for a moment during that wild rush for safety had I not been aware of the tenacious presence of Lucretia. Her power was increasing, increasing. Despite my confused mental state, I seemed to know that my only hope lay in reaching the office before my will completely succumbed to the force sending its tentacles from beyond to destroy me. With clammy, trembling fingers, I fitted my key into the lock. Then, banging the door behind me, I locked it from within and threw the inner key out of the window.

For the present at least, the spirit of Lucretia was powerless to make me confess my deed to others. It was not likely that at this hour knocking or calling from the great height at which I had placed myself would attract either passers-by or the operator who snoozed in his lift. This the spirit seemed to know, for, though in a moment I must have been completely in its power, I remained all night in the office, evidently quiescent. When I awoke from the trance, the first I had ever experienced, I lay huddled on the floor, stiff and miserable, my heart pounding, my nerves jangling. What happened during the unconscious hours I do not know, though, like a horrible nightmare, I seemed to remember rehearsing again and again the details of the crimes I had committed. Waves of anguish swept over me as I realized how helpless I, the invincible, the superman, had become. The spirit that had conquered my will would come again, and ultimately there would be revealed to the world all the baseness I had kept behind the portals of my consciousness.

"OH, GOD!" I tried to pray, but the words choked me. What right had the murderer of Lucretia to ask to be spared the fury of her vengeance? At the lavatory I bathed my eyes, and when the first clerk opened the door of the office, I descended, this time by way of the lift. In the alley that separated our office building from another, I found the key I had thrown out of the window. All day I walked the streets, trying to clear my mind for the ordeal of the night. Twice now the spirit had returned, each time at precisely the

hour that Lucretia was drowned. Perhaps at no other hour could the return be effected. Working on this theory, I snatched an early supper somewhere and re-entered the office just before the last employee was leaving for the night.

Once more I locked the door on the inside and threw the key out of the window. Oh, the unspeakable horrors of that night! Again came the spirit of Lucretia, filling the room with a presence firm, effectual, but, like Lucretia, ever gentle.

"Ah, George," said the voice of the woman I had loved and murdered, "if it were not for those you are wronging, I would spare you, but because of them you must confess. Confess it all, confess it all!"

As my reeling senses sank me into oblivion, I heard through the mist that enveloped me the soothing chant, terrible in its portent. Other days, other nights followed — horrible, ghastly, enough to drive me mad, mad! My associates, seeing the wanness of my countenance, were alarmed, and in their solicitude I faced a new danger. Living hourly a thousand deaths, yet I fought for life. At length came a day when Henry Demar would not leave me.

"You are not staying at your boarding house," he said. "Where do you spend the nights?"

"At a hotel nearer the downtown district," I lied.

Demar made himself my shadow. He went to lunch with me, took me to his club for dinner. When I gave some unfinished work as excuse for returning to the office, he accompanied me. He would not leave. The shadows lengthened. Dusk approached, and with it the hour for Lucretia's coming. God, what could I do? I wanted quiet, I said, for my work was difficult, yet Demar remained. I was ill—nerves, fatigue, I pleaded. I needed solitude, but Demar was adamant. It was dark. In a moment—in a moment I should know that Lucretia had come.

"As you value my friendship, go!" I shrieked. "Go!"

Like a fiend, he smiled and was immovable. In my frenzy I had forgotten the power that once would have saved me. Like a child I sobbed, "Oh, leave me, leave me!"

Then, above my hysteria came the voice of Lucretia.

"The time has come. The time has come," the spirit chanted. "Confess, confess!"

BEFORE my will had made its final surrender, I saw the door open and others of the office force enter. A conspiracy! Lost, lost! Then oblivion.

When I awoke, I found that I had been taken to the police headquarters. The story I am writing now they told me I had given with all its incriminating details. I was glad, glad, for freedom loomed in sight. The trial, the conviction, had no terror for me. But why, God in heaven, why has Lucretia continued to come? Why, why are those eyes ever searching the innermost recesses of my soul? Is there, is there no atonement?

Ah, in the east, the first gray streaks of the morning. Steps in the hall! They are coming to lead me to the death chamber. Come, come quickly, death for which I have waited!

Again the presence of Lucretia—and now at daybreak. Strange it is, very strange. She speaks, and I do not fear her words.

"George, my dear one, you have atoned, and I am waiting for you."

Ah, Lucretia beloved!

The iron door swings open. Executioner, I am ready.

A Fearsome Tale Is

THE HEADLESS HORROR

By ROBERT EUGENE ULMER

WHAT makes my hand tremble so? You wonder why one so young should appear so old and haggard? And the gray in my hair—the lines of my face? Perhaps, too, you notice a furtive, hunted manner about my movements? Nervousness, my friends. You would like to hear about it?

Well, then, gentlemen, I shall tell you the story, for the rain is beating without and we cannot travel in such weather. Come closer, and hug the fire, for the tale of the headless horror will make your blood run cold.

You must understand that I have always been very superstitious, with a marked tendency toward spiritualism and the pursuit of weird ambitions and hobbies. One of these, in my younger days, involved a human head—that of a murderer famed in history, the assassin of a national figure. This murderer had been hanged, and the head, horribly severed, was sent to the government for preservation. It happened that I was the proprietor of an embryo museum; and when I heard of the head, I resolved to add it to my collection, foreseeing the big help it would mean for my institution.

However, I had competition. One of my friends, engaged in the same work, also desired the head. So we both set out together, each resolved to possess the prize. There was nothing of bitterness in our relations, for Bergman and I had been associated, in friendly intercourse, for many years, and always maintained sincere mutual regard. Our common desire at this time partook of good-natured rivalry, and nothing of ill-will. The one who obtained the head would have the other's good wishes.

We came to our destination. After much formality and red tape we finally were permitted to view the head, preserved in a large jar of alcohol. The murderer in life had been a pronounced brunette, with a silken mustache, glistening like a raven's back; brows of fierce concentration and force; and hair that was thick and wavy. He had been a handsome fellow, evidently; but the action of the preservative had turned the countenance to a ghastly yellow hue; the hair, brows, and mustache were a faded henna. What made the thing more repulsive was that the container was too small for the head, and the nose was pressed flat against the glass, while the staring eyes had taken on a watery, colorless complexion. The neck, crudely severed and mangled, was marked with swollen and burst arteries, while sections of the windpipe and other organs streamed from the ragged edges, floating gently in the fluid.

I regarded the object with superstitious veneration. I confess, too, a creepy sensation, and a strengthening of my occult sensibilities.

We then opened our subject. It was days before we persuaded the

government officials to listen favorably, but they at last decided to sell the head to the highest bidder. Bergman waged a hard fight, but I won eventually, and my competitor shook my hand good-naturedly, smiling to conceal his disappointment. We parted on the best of terms.

When I returned, I took my treasure into the laboratory, to prepare it, later, for display, and locked it in a cabinet, resolving to sleep and live in the building. I could run no risk of losing my valuable acquisition.

For some time following I gave myself up to a prolonged study of the history of the man whose head I now possessed, and in the course of my reading was startled to find reference to a threat made by the condemned murderer, that he would return, after death, and claim his head, no matter where, or with whom, it chanced to be. The threat was regarded, of course, as the child of a disordered mind; but upon me it produced a deep and lasting impression. The head assumed new significance, and night after night have I, surrounded by freaks and strange objects of all kinds, sat in silent meditation, gazing intently into the grotesquely distorted features of that long-dead criminal, and striving to fathom the secrets entombed within that grisly skull. I found myself looking forward confidently to the fulfilment of the murderer's prophecy; at every trifling sound I started; ordinary events were cloaked in mystery and ominous import; I saw and heard things that no other mortal recognized, until I felt myself tottering on the verge of madness.

There was one other person, incidentally, to whom the head was an object of superstitious terror. This was my only assistant, an old negro who had been in the family for years, and the one being, outside of myself, who knew that I possessed the head. Mose never looked at it without a rising of every hair on his cranium.

One night I retired as usual amid the fantastic relics of my collection, to my bed in a dark corner of the building. The moonlight shone through the window and relieved the darkness with ghostly luminance, through which strange faces peered and leered at me from other nooks and crevices. Grotesque mummies seemed to live again in the mysterious atmosphere, holding silent communion. With all this, I believed my state of mind to be normal. My nerves were keyed to highest tension.

Sleep was wooed with difficulty, and my eyes constantly wandered to the cabinet wherein was the head. From the partial darkness of its confinement, the face seemed to stare at me, with a leering grin, jeering silently at my apprehensions. In that moment I heartily wished that the murderer would return and claim the thing.

As the night wore along and sleep still did not come, I arose. As I did so, I noticed a strange quality in the air. Some occult sense was aroused and seemed to respond to a quality I could not define. Puzzled, I glanced around. I was alone, save for Mose, sleeping soundly in his corner. All was as usual. Nothing missing, nor misplaced. The sensation grew until I was conscious of a subtle, unseen presence somewhere close at hand. Long before I saw or heard anything of the horror that followed, I sensed its approach, and was waiting.

When I finally heard the closing of a door, though the sound was guarded, I concealed myself in a dark recess and waited, every sense, physical and occult, alert, convinced that the murderer had come. A thrill shuddered through me, but I waited silently, my eyes fastened upon the door through which the unseen must enter. In the passage outside all was semi-gloom. Then I saw—O God!—with a wave of

horror, a huge, misshapen form before the entrance. Nothing of it was definite, and its vague impression of general deformity made me shiver. Where the head should have been, I discerned nothing but a shapeless mass of heavy shroud: and it was this amorphous quality, this indefiniteness of form and feature, this quality of shapelessness, that struck mortal terror to my soul. I trembled in apprehension, and was bathed in icy perspiration.

Meanwhile, the silent thing without was preparing to enter. The thought of being in the same room with it wakened a frenzy of horror in me, and I wildly burst from my concealment, staggered blindly through the gloom waving a revolver, and made for the horror: but before I reached the door, the object of my frenzy disappeared as if by magic: the shrouded form seemed to melt into the surrounding darkness, and when I dashed into the corridor it was empty.

I was fully convinced now of the sincerity of the murderer's dying threat, and held not the slightest doubt as to the identity of my midnight visitor: but I resolved to fight for the possession of the head, though it cost my life. Just how I was to battle against the terrible and subtle powers of the supernatural, I had no definite idea: but I distinctly recall making an expedition, the following evening, into town and purchasing a supply of ammunition.

It was not yet 7 o'clock when I left, and I promised Mose I would not be long, for he dreaded the idea of being alone with that hideous head. However, the news of my adventure had preceded me, through what medium I do not know, and I was forced to retail an account of it to every person that waylaid me. By the time I returned it was well past 11, and silence had long since settled over the little rural community.

Just as I was within half a square of the museum, a dreadful cry of mortal terror rang upon the air. I burst into a run.

The first thing I saw on dashing into the building was Mose, struggling to his feet. His face was livid, and his eyes were staring wildly, as if he had seen a ghost. His knees knocked, and it was some time before he could speak coherently.

"Oh, Lordy, Lordy!" he groaned, with chattering teeth. "I done seen de debbil! He bust in here 'bout fifteen minutes ago, an' wake ol' Mose up. All wrapped in black, so's I couldn't see de face of him. He rush right past me, and knock poor Mose to de floor. He—he in dar—in de museum, suh!"

I waited for no more, but burst into the museum. What I saw halted me in horror.

My visitor of the preceding night stood before the cabinet, and in the gloom I could see that his hands were opening the locked doors; and they then lifted the head, jar and all, from the shelf. As if unconscious of my presence, the hideous thing removed the cover, plunged its shrouded hands into the alcohol, and dragged forth the head, dripping and clammy.

Fascinated, I saw the concealing shroud fall away, and beheld, with a thrill, the ragged, gory base upon which a head once rested. There stood the awful object, so grotesque in its headless being, proceeding about its work with the method and surety of a normal man. Nothing of halting in its movements, for it seemed that hidden eyes directed them; but when I saw the head lifted and set upon the gory base, my horror at the fantastic sight forced a cry from my lips.

The figure started, and carried the head swiftly to the pit of its arm, protecting it, evidently, from any onslaught of mine, and then came toward me, menacingly.

All my valiant determination fled. Utterly unnerved, I turned and sped like the wind, the horrible thing pursuing. The building was three stories in height; we were on the first floor. Up the steps I dashed, turning frequently to see my awful pursuer gliding, rather than running, swiftly after me, with the dogged determination of a grim messenger of death. In the pit of an arm the head rested, and I thought its sightless eyes were fixed upon me, and were directing the shrouded body in its pursuit. Not a sound from the flying feet, nothing to indicate the slightest human quality. I dashed ever upward, from step to step, my voice paralyzed by fear. How interminably long each flight of stairs seemed! Though the entire affair did not, I suppose, occupy more than fifteen minutes it was an eternity of terror to me.

I fled blindly on, and it followed relentlessly, until the roof was reached. I fled its length, but was forced to halt at the edge. There was no other roof adjacent, and I could not jump the three stories without being killed. Death was both before and behind me, and in a flash I chose the latter.

WHIRLING, like a wolf at bay, I faced the grim phantom bearing down upon me. Savagely I threw out my revolver hand, though mechanically realizing that shots could have no effect upon a thing of spirit, and fired—once, twice, three times. Blinded and temporarily deranged by fear, I failed, at first, to note the halt of my enemy, as my first shot rang out. After pressing the trigger for the last time, I saw the deformed horror sway, stagger, and then crash heavily to the roof. A strange sound of splintering wood penetrated my dazed faculties, and, amazed, I stood staring at the fallen figure as it uttered a strangled groan and relapsed into deathly silence.

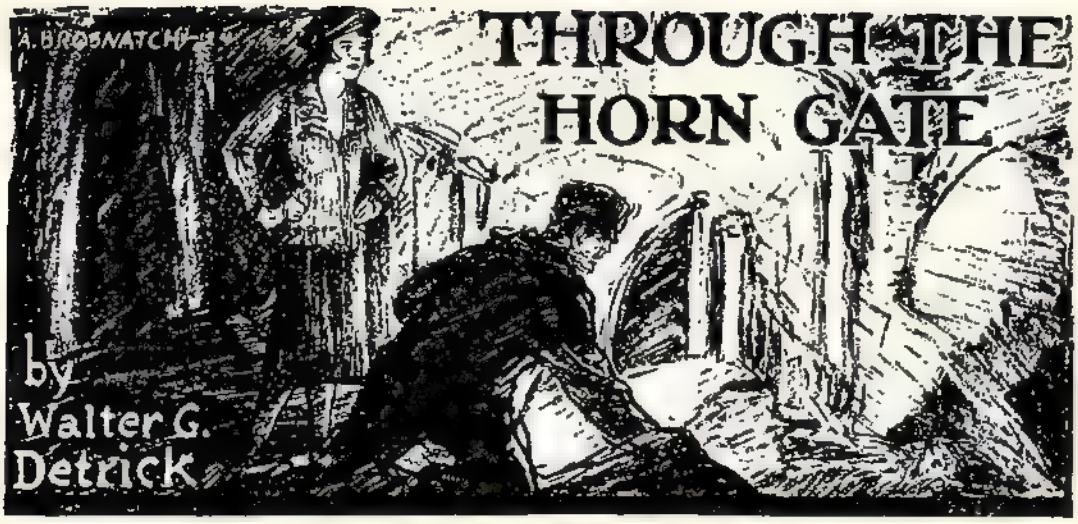
When I finally plucked up sufficient courage, I bent, drew back a fold of the heavy shroud, and started away in horror.

Before me was the face of Bergman, my old competitor, distorted in death's agony.

In a flash I saw it all—the utter duplicity of the man, his clever deceit, and the subtle trick upon my superstitious nature, by which he hoped to possess the head. The false shoulders he had worn were of wood, very light, painted realistically, crushed in the fall.

The head I returned to the government; the museum I deserted. I am a nervous wreck.

Such is the tale of the headless horror.



Two gates there are of sleep, wherefore the one is said to be of horn, by which an easy egress is given to true vision.—VIRGIL.

M'IVOR passed his hand over his forehead as if to brush away some substance that impeded his vision.

"I must be fey," he muttered, reverting in his confusion to his almost forgotten native dialect.

He was foreman of the Waterloo coal mine. It was a harsh, dim world of tunnels, shafts and slopes where only the strong could survive. During working hours hundreds of men lived, toiled, sweated and sometimes died in its gloomy depths; arc-lights gleamed along the main passageways; electric tram-cars rattled over rough rails; and the whole place hummed like a hive. Here was neither heat nor cold, sun nor moon, day nor night; time itself seemed to move with lagging feet; but ere night came to the upper world the miners quit their tasks, and the mine became as silent and lonely as one of the buried dead cities of the old world.

McIvor had entered the pit after the day's work was done. One of his duties was to make a daily round of inspection, and he could do this best when work had ceased. Years ago another mine, called the Golden Horn, had been located on the opposite side of the mountain, but it had been abandoned after a series of mishaps had given it an unenviable reputation as a hoodooed mine. Repeated cave-ins had blocked its passageways, and no one knew just how far it extended, but McIvor had reasons for believing that some of his tunnels were very close to the old ones.

He paused in a long gallery and searched until he located a mark on the wall. Taking a steel tapeline from his pocket he measured the distance from this mark to the end of the working. He wound the line back on its reel and stood for a moment absorbed in some calculation, then, selecting a pick from a number that were stacked against the wall he struck the coal a few times like a man beating a drum. Boom-oom! There was a peculiar hollow quality to the sound of the blows and the coal broke and snapped as if it were under great pressure. McIvor dropped to his knees and began to mine methodically. After a few minutes of industrious digging the pick crashed through the solid wall and a little breath of air heavy with the smell of mold blew in his face. A few more blows and he

was looking into the long sealed chambers of the Golden Horn.

He worked until he had made an opening through which a man could pass without difficulty, and then, putting aside the pick, he stood for a moment looking at his rediscovered country. It was not a pleasant place for a ramble. The old mine stood as lone and as freighted with curses as the tomb of King Tut. Behind him his own mine lay silent and deserted save for rats, as large as woodchucks, which scampered to and fro seeking what they might devour. Rats are poor company, and death often lurks in moldy old caves, but McIvor passed through the entrance he had just made and began to explore the twisted maze of tunnels with never a misgiving.

That was an hour before. Now he was weary from crawling through the dismal place, but as he sought to retravel his crooked mile he was confused and uncertain as to the direction in which lay the egress to light and air. Twist and turn, up hill and down dale, over rock and over stone had been his course, yet it was strange that McIvor should be lost in a mine. The mole does not lose itself in its burrow. Small wonder that he should touch his head and mutter: "Am I fey?"

Something, he knew not what, kept him from panic. He did not care greatly whether he found his way out or not. It seemed that he had been wandering in the Golden Horn for an interminable time. He could not remember why he came, but he was sure that he would know later.

The lamp on his cap still burned, but thick, black darkness pressed about him like a wall. Even in the small circle of radiance about the lamp, strange, misty vapors swirled and eddied. The air was heavy and foul, but he knew no discomfort. The mist and darkness seemed to be pressing ever closer about him like the rising tide of a strange ocean, but he felt that he could mingle with it and adapt himself to its humors.

He strove mightily for coherent thought, but his mind kept going back to the legends of the Golden Horn. Grim tales these were, with a romantic cast, for the miner folk who told them were mainly Scotch and Welsh with Celtic imaginations. For the most part they told of men who for one reason or another had braved the terrors of the deserted mine and then had mysteriously vanished. It was said that the unfortunate miners who had been crushed under the treacherous roof of the Golden Horn could not rest quietly but wandered through the moldy tunnels seeking ever to add others to their lost legion. They had a rime that made the old mine a place to be avoided like the plague. It was:

> He who enters the Golden Horn
> Must there abide till the judgment morn.

McIvor had often laughed at these fancies, but now they did not seem strange. Taking but little heed of his surroundings, he trudged down a wide gallery. The floor sloped gently downward and was covered with an inch or more of red slime. Water oozed from the walls and dripped monotonously from the roof to creep sluggishly to a black, lifeless sea in the deepest part of the mine. The huge timbers that propped the roof were covered with a white fungus, which shone spectral in the lamplight.

The swirling vapors grew thicker and the play of light on the fungus-covered timbers formed strange, fantastic shadows. In a little while he came to a place where farther progress was blocked by an oddly twisted mass of debris. The heavy timbers that once supported the roof were broken and, covered with the all-pervading white mold, they lay asprawl among the rocks. With an expression of vast bewilderment McIvor stood re-

garding this new obstacle in his path. He might have remained there staring stupidly until the poisonous vapor choked his lungs and the mold crept up and covered him, but it was just at this time that she came to him.

She walked from the tangle of timbers at the end of the gallery, and her manner was calm and composed, like one who keeps an appointment.

"This way," she said, and linking her arm in that of the burly miner, she led him into another gallery, which ran at right angles to the one he had been traversing.

In a confused way McIvor marveled at her presence, but there was nothing of the hobgoblin about this trim maid whose head just topped his shoulder. As far as he could judge, her dress was of the prevailing fashion. Her bobbed hair was covered by a shapeless red cap; she wore a gray sweater over a flimsy red waist; her skirt was of the usual knee-length, and her feet were clad in low shoes with French heels. A ruddy color still lingering in her cheeks and certain little mannerisms bespoke her Celtic origin; humor lurked in her sparkling eyes; but her youthful face had a drawn, wistful look.

"I've waited over long for you," she said, and her words were terribly distinct.

"You've waited for me?" said McIvor. "How did you know that I was coming, or for that matter, how did you come here yourself?"

"Please—please!" was her reply, "I don't want to answer questions now. Talk to me—talk of anything but our plight—tell me of the things I shall never see again—sunset skies, rain beating on the pavements, hurrying crowds and long lines of bright store windows."

She sighed, and her grasp on his arm tightened.

"I've been here so long that I had almost forgotten that there are creatures of flesh and blood. Once there were rats, but the last one fled long ago."

"But—but," McIvor stammered, "I *must* ask questions. It's not an hour since I broke into this old cave. Your talk is meaningless and wild, and yet," (he again passed a hand over his forehead) "strange things have happened. I can't understand your words—I can't understand anything. Come! Let us find our way out of here."

"Poor man," said the girl, "don't you know that you are in the Golden Horn? There's no way out. It's easy to come, but once here the walls close around you and you beat about forever. You have a kind face. Tell me why you came here. What have you done to deserve such a fate?"

"Again I tell you that I do not know what you mean," said McIvor in a voice that sounded thin and strange. "I tell you that I came here from another mine. I have heard strange, foolish tales about this place, but I don't believe them."

With her free hand the girl beat at the encircling mists.

"'Hell is murky!—Fie, my lord, fie!'" she quoted theatrically, then said in a more matter-of-fact tone: "Strange tales which you do not believe; well, I will tell a stranger one which you *must* believe.

"Once in an evil hour I sinned a great sin. How long ago that was I do not know, for time means nothing here. I escaped man's vengeance by hiding here, but blood calls from the ground. Here I am, and here I must bide until the last trumpet call shall rend these rocks. Strange are the paltry things for which we sell our souls. A few paces from here is the price of my sinning—yellow gold, heaps of it. I would give it all for a single ray of sunshine, but that's never, never."

Her voice trailed off wistfully.

The lamp on the miner's cap burned more feebly. The malodorous

tide of mist and darkness had risen almost to their feet. McIvor's confusion of thought was increasing, but he clung stubbornly to one idea.

"Moving picture stunts—tales of Captain Kidd's buried treasure—all pure moonshine," he muttered. "I tell you it is time for us to get away from here."

"I tell you that we can't escape—you can't leave me," said the girl, clinging to him. "Another man once sought to run away from fate. He was a great sinner, but there was no blood on his hands. He found a way out, but it was not by a road that you would care to travel."

In their walk they had reached a place where their path was partly blocked by fallen rock.

"O stiff-necked one," she said in an impatient tone, "look beneath yon rock and see what you see."

With an impatient shrug McIvor bent over the rock indicated, but at the sight of what lay underneath he tried to scream; his tongue, however, clove to the roof of his mouth and no sound came forth.

Beneath the crushing weight lay the figure of a man. Caught by the descending rock, he lay asprawl like a beetle smashed by a heavy foot. The hair and beard had continued to grow after death and formed an unkempt tangle about the fleshless features. White mold covered the partly mummified body with ghastly garments. Lying on its back, with mouth agape, the horror seemed to mock the living man.

In fascinated horror McIvor bent closer over the dreadful thing, and as he did so a little stream of ice-cold water, issuing from the seamed roof above him, touched the back of his neck and partly roused his dormant faculties.

"Hell's fire, am I really mad?" he shrieked.

He would have seized the girl with a sweep of his long arm, but just at that instant the light sputtered and went out, and his groping hand clutched at empty darkness. Moving quickly he bumped his head sharply against the roof. A trickle of blood ran down his face, but the pain and shock were kind, for they broke the spell that had bound him for so long and he was once more alert and capable. An odor like a faint perfume assailed his nostrils and he needed no one to tell him that this was the deadly black-damp.

With death and nightmare terror urging him on, he began a mad race. The darkness about him was now absolute, but blind fear guided him well, for his feet found a path free from obstacles. Nature, however, has limits beyond which it cannot be driven, and the spark that drove the human machine was about to go out as the light had gone, when like a draft from some magical fountain a breath of pure air came to his laboring lungs and his hand touched an iron rail. Here was one of the galleries where men lived and worked—here a fan sent gusts of living air.

He had not reached this haven any too soon, for behind him he heard the sound of breaking timbers and the crash of falling rocks. The mountain was settling, burying anew whatever secrets the old mine might hold. In so far as he was concerned they might lie there undisturbed until the judgment day.

He staggered on until he saw a gleam of light, then, plunging forward like a drunken man, he slumped down on the hard ties of the tram road. He was so utterly weary that they seemed like a very comfortable bed. An electric light gleamed above him but no human beings were near.

He lay very still, and presently the great rats crept from their hiding places and stared at him with their shifty eyes. Some of the bolder ones came very near him, but he made no

move to drive them away. They, at least, were creatures of the pleasant world that he had all but left forever. For a long time he did not stir, but lay gasping and panting, repeating over and over again great, meaningless oaths without reason or continuity, but at length he became composed enough to begin the long walk to the surface.

It was night when, pale and ghastly like one restored from the grave, McIvor emerged from the mine, and although the season was midsummer, he shook as if with the ague.

Old Andy McPhail, the grizzled Scotch watchman, found him as he stood blinking inanely at the stars, and Andy's canny eyes saw at once that something was amiss with his countryman.

"Man dear, you're trembling like a leaf," he exclaimed. "Here's a drop of something good. Now what is it? Has a ghost been entertaining you?"

Before trusting himself to speak, McIvor leaned against a convenient pile of timber and drank greedily from the proffered flask. The fiery fluid warmed his veins, stilled his chattering teeth and restored some of his native caution. He returned the liquor with the customary word of thanks and then gave the following account of his adventure:

"No, Andy, I haven't been seeing ghosts, but I came near being one myself. This evening I happened to sound one of the walls at the end of the mine. It rang hollow as a drum, and in a few minutes I had broken into an old heading which I thought belonged to the Golden Horn mine. As you know, it has been abandoned for years and there are no maps for it. All seemed clear and I started to do a little exploring.

"The place had more gas in it than was good for me, and I became muddled and lost my way. It's strange the things a few whiffs of bad air can do to a man. In the end I managed to blunder out, but my head is still buzzing and I find it hard to think straight."

"Well," said the old man meditatively, "it may be that you were lucky. It's small good that's come to anyone who has dealings with the Golden Horn these many years. Did you by any chance meet Red Mike Flint or pretty Peggy Odel while you were investigating?"

"Red Mike! Peggy Odel! Who are they?" asked McIvor without displaying too much interest.

"Did you never hear of them?" asked the old man in surprize. "Oh, I remember that you are new to these parts," he continued. "They were the pair that worked the badger game on old Collins, the bank messenger.

"To be brief, they decoyed him into a closed car where he was slugged and properly bound and gagged. Just what they meant to do with him will always be a mystery, but they were taking him all bound and swathed like an Egyptian mummy, right through the streets of his native village, when he managed partly to free himself and grappled with Red Mike. The red one threw him smash to the pavement and his female accomplice finished the work by emptying an automatic into her late admirer.

"In spite of a great hue and cry the precious pair made good their escape. A car, said to have been the one used in the robbery, was found in the mud of an old quarry near here, but from that day to this not a trace has ever been found of either miscreant or of the bank's money which went with them. Some people say that they took refuge in the Golden Horn and were caught by a cave-in, but there's no logical reason for such a belief."

"It's a rum yarn, anyway," said McIvor; but as he walked away he passed a hand, which shook a little, over his forehead and mumbled: "Was I fey?"

A Radio Horror, Created by a Mad Brain, Menaced the World With Destruction

The Electronic Plague

By EDWARD HADES

THE Electronic Plague, that infernal and unparalleled blight which spread over the country on the evening of September 10, 1935, just after nightfall when everybody was tuning up the radio—casting street and house into utter darkness, stopping completely the machinery of civilization, and striking tens of thousands of persons unconscious, hundreds of them never to awake—the Electronic Plague has never been satisfactorily explained to the public. Few know the true story. Officials of the War Department have, locked securely away in their most secret vault, the device that caused the woful disaster, and with it a document, the confession of Dr. Alexander Gnash, its inventor, who himself died in the plague. His niece, Ruth Palmer, understands how it happened; and there is one other, Urban Woodward. Ruth and Urban are married and never mention the matter except at an intimate family gathering, when the family, only a year old, merely gurgles and does not comprehend.

It happened in the queerest way. Urban had been humming sweetly along at a modest twenty-five miles an hour, watching his speedometer in anticipation of the instant when it should register a total of 500 miles. He had promised the salesman to go those first 500 miles very slowly; but he had promised himself to cover the 501st mile at the maximum. Now the numbers were hovering at 499, about to change; his impatient foot was yearning to push the accelerator into the floor. At the crucial moment his engine calmly died, for no reason at all that Urban was aware of.

With mock savageness he shook the steering wheel and glared at the futile, unmoving figures. Genuinely disappointed at the failure of his climax but still able to laugh, he exercised the starter—with no result. Not a sound came as he pressed and pressed and pressed again.

Then gradually his lights went out. Beyond question there was something wrong, and his disappointment changed to annoyance and alarm. He was already half an hour late for an engagement. Desperately he took out his flashlight, intending to investigate; his flashlight, too, went out immediately after he turned it on. Striking matches, he opened the hood—a mere formality, for he knew nothing about the motor. It looked just as usual to him.

Here was a pretty fix! He was still two miles away from Hawkspit, where lived his friend "Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable."

He sat on the running board and considered ways and means. If another automobile would come along and render first aid—but nothing passed from either direction. Suddenly he remembered going by several stalled machines before he himself had stalled. There seemed to be an epidemic of engine trouble over here in Jersey.

Tracks for a trolley-car line ran along the road, but no car came, and he soon tired of waiting. With each minute he felt himself becoming more unpopular with Elaine. He began to walk, intending to stop at the first house to use the telephone.

The night was inky black except for occasional dim flashes of lightning, and as he walked even the lightning ceased to play. Coming to a clearing laid out into building lots, he looked over the Palisades and the river to the other side. The sky was deep blue-black instead of its customary reflected splendor. He rubbed his eyes and stared. The lights of New York had gone out!

Urban started fearfully. A peculiar terror seized him, an unnatural tremble stirred his limbs. It was rather enjoyable, almost voluptuous, and he tried to laugh it away. Something had happened to him; that was sure. Was it the end of the world? If it was that, would he be left alive and forgotten?

But jest as he might, this feeling of being left alone in a changed world made him far from comfortable. The black air, heavy and lifeless, seemed unfit to breathe. He hurried on, exasperated at his lack of energy. At last a glimmer appeared by the roadside. A house loomed uncertainly, and his irritation vanished along with his vague imaginings. A house, a telephone, and soon he would be telling Elaine how afraid of the dark he had been, and next calling a garage to take care of his car. Then, with Elaine, let it be as dark as the pit: he would never object!

URBAN stumbled and groped across the lawn, up to a veranda, and knocked at the door. Minutes passed before it opened and a figure in white stood holding a candle and waiting in silence.

"I want to use the telephone; may I?" he asked politely. "My car has broken down."

No answer. The figure turned, with a backward glance that invited him in. He saw that it was a girl, tall, even taller than he, and young, with great eyes ashine in the flickering light. He put on a bold though respectful smile, and assumed an ease he did not possess as he followed her.

"Are your lights out of commission too?" he began, but she gave him no reply, only set the candle on a small table, indicated the telephone, and withdrew. Tactful she was, he thought, but mysterious, and greatly troubled.

With his imagination running free again, Urban searched his pockets for Elaine's number. He looked after the white-robed figure with more interest than he paid the letters and cards. She was at a window, bent over, chin resting on interlaced fingers. He believed he heard a sob. Pity flooded his soul.

He put the receiver to his ear and waited; but wait as he would, and play with the hook, and plead "hello", no response came from the operator. He sat a long time, forgetting Elaine and wondering about the girl at the window.

"Your phone's out of order," he said lamely.

"I know," she murmured.

He studied her words.

"May I stay with you—for a while?"

He was gentle but sure.

After long minutes, "You are welcome," she said.

He advanced toward her.

"Oh, do not leave me!" she burst out, almost begging. "Please don't go away! There's something terrible going on tonight, and I cannot be alone any longer. Aunt's asleep, and uncle— . . ."

She broke off sobbing.

"That's all right," he comforted. "It's just the lights, and they'll go on soon, and you'll feel better. Cheer

up! Why, all New York is dark! A storm must be coming, and it has interfered with the power."

He took her hand, and she gave it to him so trustingly, and met his eyes so helplessly, that the image of Elaine at the back of his mind was blotted out forever.

"Let us get acquainted," he proposed.

"Take me outside," she said breathlessly. "I'm stifling. There's something wrong in here. I almost think there is something wrong with the whole world tonight. I feel ready to lie down and die. It is not a pain, it is not unpleasant, but it is becoming worse and worse."

It was true. Urban felt his former weakness returning. Some subtle poison was enervating him, and he was tempted to close his eyes and surrender to delicious oblivion. Almost collapsing, he shook off his lassitude and helped the girl out to the veranda, where he placed her in a swinging chair. She was so stricken that he almost had to carry her.

"It is nothing," he assured her. "It will pass. I'll call you up tomorrow (I have your number), and we'll laugh to remember how nervous and foolish we have been. Do not give in. Listen to me. Though it is a stupid thing to say, I feel that I have known you long. And I don't even know your name, nor you mine."

He stopped talking, and fell beside her, stunned, gulping the air as if he were about to faint. He was suffering now, but fought for consciousness. He lighted a cigarette and tried to laugh, but failed altogether.

"I . . . I . . ." he heard her gasp.

"Shall I . . . get . . . a glass of water?" he asked, with effort.

He pulled himself to his feet, walked a step, fell back, and gave up.

"No good pretending," he said. "I'm not well myself."

He tried to be natural, to smile, but terror gnawed at his heart. Some insidious force seemed to be sapping his life away. He looked fixedly into her eyes, the blank unfocused eyes of one in a trance. He crept close to her, embraced her, and kissed her mouth. A long time they remained together thus. A faint, despairing cry came from within the house, but they were conscious only of one another.

"If we die," he declared hoarsely, "it will be a shame, for I love you, I know. Many times I have said this; but it is true this time. And this time there seems no use in saying it."

"Hush," she whispered, hardly audible. "I believe you."

"We must fight," he insisted. "We can never die, loving like this. We must hold fast to our love, and it will keep us alive for each other. Fight, my dear."

And as they clung and kissed she became less passive. Once she stroked his cheek.

"But I am so sleepy," she complained.

"Do not give in," he warned. "Fight, or it may be the end."

"I hardly care," came her weary reply.

It began to lighten and thunder. One bolt struck directly overhead, fairly shook the house, seemed to pass right through them. Rain pattered on the roof and began to pour. Dreadful though the storm was, they welcomed it. It made the air alive again and charged with energy. Urban kissed the girl softly and found strength to stand and hold her upright. They staggered a little way into the reviving rain.

"I must see to my aunt," she said, and went into the house.

While he waited in the hall the lights winked and brightened, settling at last into steady illumination.

Urban expanded with relief. Things were taking on their normal aspect again.

The girl rejoined him, and announced, very calmly: "My aunt is dead."

"But," he objected, "not dead, surely!"

"My aunt is dead."

"Your uncle—you mentioned your uncle," he stammered.

"He is in the attic, at his radio," she said stonily.

He followed her glance toward a door, and started to open it.

"Don't," she commanded, holding his arm. "Don't go . . . He is a madman, or worse. I am afraid to go near him."

"He may need help," Urban persisted.

With his hand on the knob, he hesitated, sensing danger. All the evil and strange events of the night rose in his mind, connecting themselves with this uncle and his mysterious radio. It was in obedience to a duty not to be shirked that he opened the door. He flung it wide and stepped back.

A dim white light, a ghostly kind of mist, radiating all the colors of the spectrum, streaked over the stairs from above.

"What is it?" he asked in fearsome awe.

"I never saw this before. But it must be what affected us, what killed my aunt. Keep away from it. Oh, take me out of this terrible place!"

"Later: but first I shall have a look."

As he moved forward the old spell came over him again. But she was at his side, and, supporting each other, they faced the unknown power.

"Let us see what it is, this radio of your uncle's," he said with forced lightness.

Clinging together, they charged the stairs and surveyed the attic. It was unearthly in this odd white light. Wires and tools were everywhere about, confusing and blocking their progress.

"In the corner, there!" the girl exclaimed.

At a table piled with battery-boxes and flashing lights, from which emanated the white glow, sat a motionless, gray old man.

"It has killed him, too," the girl said, unmoved.

The man's head, blackened hideously, rested on his shoulder, and his black gown was almost burned away.

"This is no radio, no ordinary radio," Urban exclaimed.

Swiftly he went to the table and overturned it. The instruments of death and destruction crackled, sputtered, and subsided; the unwholesome light disappeared with the wreckage.

"That hellish contraption will do no more harm, I guess. Shall we go down?"

"It has done its harm, I fear," the girl mourned. "Oh, how could he! He hated us, he hated the whole world, for no reason whatever! But he was not wicked. I have always thought him mad."

Urban stooped to pick up a paper, and led her below. Under a soothing lamp, while the girl wept without restraint, they read:

To whomever it may concern—and I daresay it concerns the whole world, for I believe the whole world goes honking and clanking past my house, disturbing the quiet of my thoughts, breaking in upon my musings. But not after tonight! This night I mean to let loose my power upon the air. The Hertzian waves, instead of bearing jazz bands and bedtime stories, shall broadcast the Gnash electronic force which shall stop this rush of automobiles, these garish lights—shall, in fact, stop this damnable age of machinery which I loathe! Tomorrow a new civilization shall begin, an age of peace and contemplation.

I know my invention will destroy automobiles. It will cripple power plants; it must paralyze everything that runs by electricity. And what else it will do I cannot say.

This theory that life itself is electricity makes me pause. . . . What then? Shall I broadcast death? But I *will* go on. The Electronic Plague—on with the Electronic Plague!

ALEXANDER GNASH.

THEY talked, while a rose and gray dawn revealed the earth to them again. Urban went for his machine; it ran as if nothing had happened to it, and was now awaiting them by the roadside.

"Let us get started," he was saying.

"I should think you would despise me. . . ."

"On account of your uncle? But you had nothing to do with all that. I love you and you love me. Your uncle was a cruel and decadent man, but he is dead. It was a narrow escape, but we loved each other, and our love kept us alive. . . . I have been through fire and earthquake in my time, through flood and cyclone. I lived through the influenza epidemic, and now the Electronic Plague. Nothing can kill me."

"It is possible," she ventured, "that all the rest of mankind is dead."

"And only we two living? Hardly. You shall see."

At that moment a folded newspaper described an arc and dropped upon the porch, while the carrier continued on his way with a whistle.

"That fellow at least is a survivor. And the morning paper comes as usual, to tell us all about it. On Doomsday, I verily believe, the papers will be issued with full accounts of the event, and lists of the sheep and the goats."

He opened it eagerly, and they read of a mystified country, interrupted wheels, unconscious people, thousands stricken, hundreds estimated as dead, but many recovering, and affairs in general struggling back to proper functioning.

"This is stupendous," she grieved. "I feel as if I were in some way responsible."

"You shall never be connected with it," he said with conviction. "We are the only two who know, and we need never say a word, though I know a newspaper man who would be grateful for the tip."

"This will haunt me all my life. I must tell. I shall never be merry again as long as I live. Better if I had died too. . . ."

"From now on you shall be happy, for you are going to enjoy life, with me," he consoled her. "Why, many a time I have felt ready to lie down and die, and instead packed up and started for some other spot on the earth. Civil-engineering in Central America . . . with the marines in Haiti . . . teaching in the Philippines . . . back home to Illinois and the farm . . . off again to Texas oil fields . . . just as soon as existence staled and the joy of living evaporated, with me it has been away to pastures new seeking happiness."

"I shall never be happy," she insisted.

"You shall. Try it with me. Here, selling stock in New York, I have been successful and contented. Married to you, everything will be perfect. Why, dear, we love each other, and that settles it. Come. I shall marry you, in spite of your mood, no matter what you say."

And so it was. . . . Later in the day, having attended to their personal affairs, they found a moment to discuss what was to be done about the disaster. They deemed it best to report the matter to authorities at Washington. The War Department took control and ordered secrecy. That was all; except that certain knowing ones declare that the United States can now enforce peace among the nations, and that there will never be another war.

THE LAST OF THE TEEHEEMEN

by Arthur Thatcher

Author of "The Valley of Teeheemen"

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

AIDING Roderick Sharon in his search for his daughter, who was kidnaped by dog-faced savages in the wilds of Brazil, Holton and his comrades seek out the Valley of Teeheemen, which they had visited five years before. They find the city of Teeheemen deserted, the cave men of Morop fled from the hollow mountain, and the temple inhabited by enormous milk-white snakes and great, round-headed birds. Following the river in search of the thirty thousand vanished inhabitants of Teeheemen, they rescue Duros, who is a slave to the race of dog-faced men that have captured Sharon's daughter Rosalie. Duros and Holton effect the rescue of the five thousand survivors of the tribe in the caves of Ugu, king of the dog-faced men. Holton and Rosalie, attempting to make good their escape, encounter the great beast teeheemen, and Holton shoots its eyes out. It wanders away and dies. The rest of Holton's party see it die, and try to find Holton and Rosalie, but the two cannot be found.

10

WHEN Holton and Rosalie had followed the trail broken by the wounded teeheemen for a mile, they paused to allow the girl to fasten the leather lacing of one of her sandals.

Holton watched her as she stooped on one knee. When he raised his glance again to the surrounding vegetation, he uttered an exclamation of astonishment and brought his rifle to his shoulder. At the report of the weapon, Rosalie Sharon rose to her feet and saw a dog-faced warrior fall in the thicket before her. Another and another went down before the unerring aim of Holton.

The thicket surrounding the two was swarming with the savages. Holton fired until a rush of some hundred of the dog-faced men overwhelmed him and bore him, with his gun clubbed, to the earth.

"The white queen of the river men will be returned to the cave of Ugu," announced the chieftain of the savages, speaking in the language of the men of Teeheemen. "The white king shall also go with her. The white king and queen will make a good feast for King Ugu."

The arms of Holton were pinioned behind his back and he was escorted with Rosalie through the jungle back toward the caves of the dog-faced savages.

After a long march without intermission the open fields skirting the

River of Teeheemen were again reached. Down the face of one of the bluffs the two were led to the edge of the river.

The march continued past the prison caves, where for so long the men and women of Teeheemen had been herded for safe keeping.

When the prison caves had been passed, the entrances in the side of the bluffs became more numerous. From every cave mouth the dog men appeared and shouted curses at the two captives of the war party.

The warriors conducting Rosalie Sharon and Holton finally halted at the mouth of a large cave. A fat savage came from the interior.

"Ugu has commanded that the white queen be returned to the cave of the king until her slaughter is ordered," said the fat savage. "You may also take the white male with you to the same place."

"We'll let them see the interior of your butcher shop," announced the chieftain, forcing Rosalie to enter the place.

Holton felt his sensibilities reel as he walked into the horror place, and Rosalie Sharon closed her eyes so that she could not view the uncanny sight before her. From the walls about were hanging the slaughtered bodies of human beings. Some were the entire bodies. From others, various portions of the body had been removed according to the desire of the purchaser of human flesh.

"That is the second time I have been in that terrible place," Rosalie announced to Holton when they were again in the outer world. "The captives, such as those that you and your friend liberated last night, have been slaughtered and their flesh sold from the butcher caverns the same as we in America slaughter and retail the flesh of cattle. It is terrible—terrible!"

"What will they do, now that the men of Teeheemen are gone?" he asked.

"They will go and attack some other nation just as they carried the people of Teeheemen into captivity."

The entrance to the cavern where King Ugu lived was reached, and the entire party entered the place. It was lighted with a number of fires whose smoke issued through holes that had been made through the roof of the cavern to the outer world.

Torches stood in various niches along the walls, and beautiful stalactites of silica reflected sparklingly the glimmer of the light from the fires.

In one of the far recesses of the great cave the two were led before King Ugu. The dog-faced ruler of the savage dog men was seated like a tailor on the skin of an enormous saber-tooth tiger, known to the men of Teeheemen as the begri.

A hideous smile played over his features, his pug nose lifting after the fashion of a bull terrier's as he exposed his wolflike teeth in an expression of pleasure over the recapture of Rosalie Sharon.

"Elee has done well," he announced in praise of the captain of the forces who had made the capture. "Not only has he brought back the white female, but a male as well. Three suns from now King Ugu will have a great feast and Elee shall help him to eat the flesh of the white queen and her brother. Until then confine them in the recess near the upper mouth of the cave."

Ugu raised both of his arms above his head in sign that the arraignment was at an end and that the judgment he had passed was final.

The warriors commanded by Chief Elee hurried the captives along the cavern for a quarter of a mile before they led them into a small recess that

joined the outer main cave by a narrow opening. Into the small recess, Holton and Rosalie were thrust. Chief Elee selected six of his greatest warriors to serve as guards at the opening and then departed from the spot.

11

BENTON and the other members of the expedition came to an abrupt halt when they had proceeded something like half a mile from the tree where Holton and Rosalie had escaped from the teeheemen.

At a warning from Benton, the members of the party crouched like hunted animals to the earth. The individual who had been observed by Benton had also detected the members of the party before they could fall to the earth.

"Be not afraid," came the cry in the language of the men of Teeheemen. "It is Duros and his men, who are seeking the white gods."

In another minute, the members of the two groups had united, and Duros explained to Benton what had occurred in the fields and along the river before the prison caves and the caverns of habitation of the men of Ugu. Gomo leapt several times into the air with sheer delight at sight of Benton and Otter.

"Holton must have returned to the camp tree," Otter insisted. "I'll bet a horse (if there is one in the Valley of Teeheemen) that he is in camp waiting for us now."

The return toward the tree camp was continued. The place was approached and soon the men stood beneath the tree where the platform had been constructed. Holton and Rosalie were not at the place.

"They have tried to reach the city of Teeheemen, probably," Benton suggested. "We should not all have left the camp. They may have arrived here during our absence, and not finding us, have gone to the city beyond the plain."

"Let us follow them," said Otter.

"It's the best plan, I believe," Benton agreed.

The march for the city of Teeheemen was begun, and four hours later the men reached the treeless plain and proceeded toward the city without stopping. Another long march and the walls of the city became visible in the distance. Another hour and the party stood at the main entrance in the wall. The rescued inhabitants had all arrived and the stone entrance had been closed. At the approach of the Duros party with the white men, the stone opening slid aside and the detachment entered.

"Did the other white god and a white female arrive here?" Duros demanded of the guards at the gate.

The men replied that they had not seen the two.

"They are not here," Duros spoke.

"They are lost somewhere there in the Valley of Teeheemen," suggested Otter.

"Or else they have been slain by wild animals or recaptured by the men of Ugu."

Benton and Otter, with the other members of their party, were assigned to quarters in the old palace that had once been the residence of King Urlus when first they knew the Valley of Teeheemen.

Leaving Sharon and the others, who were worn out from their long trip, Benton and Otter walked about the formerly deserted city. On every hand there was feverish activity. Thousands of spears had been fashioned during the day and bows and arrows had been made in great numbers. Great stones had been lifted to the top of the walls of the city in preparation for the expected attack from the men of Ugu should they attempt to retake the city of Teeheemen.

Duros had assumed complete charge, and to him Benton and Otter took one of the extra rifles that had been carried by their guides. They also brought one for Gomo, who was at the headquarters of his chief when the two white men arrived.

"You will know how to use these in case of an attack," Benton said.

Duros and Gomo both expressed delight at again possessing one of the thunder sticks.

"The dog-faced men threw our others, given by the white gods, into the river after they had captured us," Duros explained.

Benton and Otter walked to the stone entrance. When they arrived the gate was being opened to admit a number of men who had been on a hunting expedition for the native deer in the scrub thickets that skirted the river a short distance from the city. There were fifty men in the party, and they carried twenty large animals, which they had slain.

"Our people have been hunting all day and bringing game into the city," one of the guards explained. "We are drying the meat in the sun and smoking it for future use. The fruit trees within the walls of the city are heavily laden with fruit. The people of the city will be prepared to stand a long siege."

"We can always go into the world beyond the hollow mountain," Benton suggested. "There is food in abundance there if we run short after the dog men lay siege to this place."

"If Holton and Miss Sharon were only here," remarked Otter, "I should relish an assault against this place by the hound faces."

"If the two do not come by tomorrow," said Benton, "it will be our duty to organize a company and attempt once again to find them. I am in hopes that they will yet reach here tonight."

SHORTLY before the following dawn, Benton, Otter and Sharon, with the three guides, were awakened from their sleep by a messenger from Duros.

"The men of Ugu are about the walls of the city," he informed them excitedly. "The fighting is even now beginning before the outer walls."

Otter and the others hurriedly arose and followed the guide toward the outer walls.

"We had better take up our position at a point where the danger is the greatest," said Benton. "The men of Teeheemen generally are not in good physical condition. Their long captivity has rendered them weaker than in normal times."

"Did you bring your bombs?" asked Otter, turning to Benton.

"I did," he replied. "I brought one dozen of them with me. They are not heavy to carry, not more so than a similar number of baseballs."

"The point of greatest danger is the wall before the gate," the messenger announced. "One assault was made there this morning in the first attack. The dog-faced men want to get inside the wall at that point if possible and roll the stone gate back. Then the thousands who are without on the plains before the city can rush in and again overwhelm and carry away our people."

"We'll go to the gate, then," Benton announced, and the march toward that point was resumed with quickened pace.

As the gate was approached, the men of Benton's party could detect that a second determined assault was taking place upon the walls at that point.

The members of the party ran. A battle between dog-faced warriors who had succeeded in scaling the high outer wall and gaining the inside in the vicinity of the gate was taking place.

Benton and Otter drew their automatics for the close fighting, and rushing into the contending battlers, they began firing at the dog-faced savages, one after another in rapid succession. Sharon imitated their example, and the three guides also followed in the attack.

The immediate danger within the walls was again disposed of, and Benton, with the others, ascended to the top of the wall where the fighting men of Teeheemen were gathered resisting the efforts of the dog-faced savages who were swarming before the city.

The dog men, in addition to their spears and bows, were carrying thousands of long poles, which they had brought to use in scaling the walls. Benton and Otter, when they reached the top of the wall, saw one of the attempts made to scale the wall at a point a hundred yards to the right of the stone gate.

Dog-faced savages carrying a dozen pole ladders rushed toward the wall. Several of their number went down with arrows in their vitals from the unerring bows of the men of Teeheemen. The poles were finally lodged against the top of the outer wall and the dog-faced men with their claw-equipped hands and feet ran up the poles with the agility of squirrels.

The warriors of Teeheemen gathered at that point to resist the assault. Terrific battling took place for several minutes before the men of Teeheemen were successful in throwing down the pole ladders. The savages who had gained the top of the wall fought with indescribable fury, and several of the men of Duros were slain before their assailants were forced back into the plain before the outer wall. Three score of the savages rushed close to the wall and attempted again to raise the long poles into position for climbing.

The enormous stones that had been hoisted to the walls by the men of Teeheemen came into good use. Several of the large ones were released and crashed upon the laboring savages at the base of the wall. A dozen of the dog-faced men met death from the crushing weights before they could reach the zone of safety.

A lull occurred in the attack, following this assault. The thousands of men of Ugu withdrew and rested. Benton and Otter had an opportunity to study the situation.

"They are preparing for a determined assault on the gateway," said Benton, giving his analysis of the movements that were taking place several hundred yards before the main entrance to the city.

"It appears so," Otter agreed.

After half an hour had passed, one of the chief captains of the men of Ugu approached closer to the city wall and spoke in a loud voice.

"Men of Duros, men of Teeheemen, the warriors of Ugu are going to capture your city. In two suns, King Ugu of the river dwellers will sacrifice the white queen and a white male of her kind to the spirits of the river and prepare a great feast from their bodies. The men of Teeheemen cannot resist the gods of the river men when they have been pleased by the offerings made by King Ugu. The gods of the river fight with the men of Ugu. The men of Teeheemen may live much longer if they will surrender now and again become subject to the men of Ugu."

Duros and Gomo, who had joined with Benton and Otter, listened to the offer of the captain of Ugu with scorn.

Duros started to reply, but his effort was cut short by the report of Otter's rifle, and the captain of the men of Ugu fell with a bullet in his forehead.

"That's my method of arguing with those dogs," remarked Otter.

"It was a long shot but this is a darned good gun."

With the falling of the captain a yell of anger and defiance rose from the ranks of the savages before the walls.

"Did you get what that hound-face said?" Benton asked. "Holton and Miss Sharon have been recaptured and must be confined in the cavern of King Ugu. In two days they are to be offered to the river gods of the dog men and their bodies utilized for a feast by the king."

"We'll have to make an attempt tonight to rescue them," Otter affirmed.

"Yes," Benton agreed, "if we have to blast our way through the cavern of King Ugu himself with some of my bombs."

Gomo approached with Duros, and Benton announced to the men of Teeheemen what he and Otter were contemplating.

"Gomo knows the way to the cavern of Ugu," announced the companion of Duros. "Gomo was confined as a slave for the white queen in the cavern. There are two entrances to the cave. One is the main opening in the face of the river bluff and the other is one that leads into the fields. The last entrance is not known to many, even of the men of Ugu themselves. It is kept guarded by six of the best warriors of the royal cavern. The side cavern joining the main cave where the white queen was always kept, is but a short distance from the opening into the fields."

"Then what is to prevent our gaining entrance to the royal cave of Ugu tonight?" Benton exclaimed. "Will you go with us, Gomo?"

The big native nodded.

"Gomo will go and show the way."

"Duros would go, too," announced the chieftain.

"But Duros should remain with his warriors and direct the battle for the safety of the city," Benton insisted. "Otter, Gomo and I will leave at dark for the cavern of Ugu and attempt to enter it and release Holton and Miss Sharon."

The conversation was interrupted by a sudden rush toward the city gate of several thousand of the dog-faced warriors. Benton passed two of his bombs to Otter with hurried instructions regarding the setting of the release key.

"Wait until I give the word," he ordered. "Let them swarm up close to the wall, then throw one as far from the wall as you can, right into the midst of them."

The men of Ugu had planned an overwhelming assault. The onrushing horde carried several hundred long poles for scaling the wall and concentrated in a mass many hundreds deep before the wall in the vicinity of the gate.

The warriors of Teeheemen on the walls hurled great stones upon the crowds beneath, but the dog men paid no attention to the death of so many of their fellows and persisted in the effort to scale the wall.

Benton waited until the tops of several long poles were shoved to the top of the wall, then set the release key of the bomb to explode in six seconds. He hurled the bomb into the thickest of the yelling mob of savages. The explosion was terrific and the results horrifying. Hundreds of the dog-faced warriors were torn to pieces and additional hundreds stunned and maimed.

Otter in emulation of the example of Benton cast his bomb into another section of the massed crowd, with even more devastating effect than the one hurled by Benton. The survivors before the city gate rushed away in panic-stricken haste and paused only within their lines, a quarter of a mile from the walls.

The warriors of Duros at the beginning of the retreat rolled aside the stone door and began slaughtering their wounded and stunned enemies who had not been killed outright by the bombs. As the dog men fled from before the city wall, Duros returned with Gomo to the side of Benton.

A smile of delight played upon the features of the Teeheemen chieftain.

"The white gods are more powerful than ever," he said. "The city of Teeheemen is safe as long as they are here."

"Safe until the bombs run out," Otter interrupted. "How many did you bring, Benton?"

"I brought only one dozen. We have ten left. I wish there were a hundred, so that we could defy the men of Ugu to take this city. When our supply is exhausted we shall not have much chance to prevent the enemy from pouring over the wall. There appear to be many thousands of the creatures."

"We can fight them off until we have no more," Otter suggested, "then there is nothing to prevent the men of Teeheemen from fleeing through the hollow mountain into the outer world and migrating to a newer country."

Benton nodded.

"I believe there will be no further attacks today. We must make the attempt to reach the cave of Ugu tonight. I am going to leave all but three of my bombs with Duros. I can teach him how to release the mechanism that explodes them and set the length of time suitable for this condition before we go. In that manner Duros and his men can hold the city until we return."

Benton and Otter sought out Duros. They explained to the chieftain and Sharon their intention. The latter requested that he be given part of the bombs in order to assist in the defense of the city, while the two with Gomo were away on their trip.

When the instruction in bomb throwing had been given to Duros and Sharon, then Benton, accompanied by Otter and Gomo, returned to the quarters in the former palace to sleep and rest before the strenuous activities they knew must await them in the coming night.

12

When the detachment of Elee had retired into the far recesses of the cavern, Holton began making efforts to release his bonds. Rosalie assisted him and succeeded in untying the damp leather thongs with which he had been fastened.

Holton stretched his arms to relieve the muscles that had been cramped as a result of the position in which they had been held so long. He began studying the recess in which they were lodged. There was no visible exit except the one through which they had entered the place. The six guards remained within the mouth of the exit with their spears constantly ready for action.

"Is there no exit other than the one through which we came into the main cavern?" Holton asked.

"There is another that extends back into the distant recesses of the bluff and opens somewhere into the fields. Gomo informed me to that effect, but I have never been taken through that exit."

The day passed, and when evening had come to the outer world, several dog-faced savages brought a quantity of fruit to the captives. When the two had finished eating of the food before them, a half dozen guards came to relieve the ones who had been stationed all day at the mouth of the cavern.

A half hour after the relief guard had been stationed, a number of the chief captains accompanied King Ugu

into the recess where Holton and Rosalie were sitting. The fat butcher, whom Holton remembered as the one he had seen in charge of the butcher cave, was in the crowd. Holton and Rosalie rose to their feet when the procession entered.

"Ugu has ordered the feast day advanced," the king explained, pausing before Rosalie. He noted then that Holton's bonds were loosed, and immediately commanded his men to bind both of the captives.

Holton knocked three of the dog men to the floor with his fists before he was forced down by sheer weight of numbers. When he had again been secured, Ugu spoke.

"The spirits of the river gods," he explained, "demand a retribution for the men of Ugu who have been slain before the walls of the city of Teeheemen. They demand a glorious sacrifice, one that is certain to appease their displeasure and again bring victory to the arms of the men of Ugu. The greatest sacrifice that Ugu can order is to slay that which he holds the most valuable. The white queen is his choicest possession. She shall die when the god of day kisses the river at the coming of the next sun. Muto, the king's butcher, shall slaughter her and her companion as a sacrifice. Muto shall determine if she is in good condition for the slaughter."

As Ugu ceased speaking, the fat butcher stepped forward and took Rosalie by the arm. He felt carefully of her flesh and continued his examination to her lower limbs. He unfastened the one-piece trapping which she wore and lowered it from her shoulders. Satisfied with his examination, he turned to Ugu, who had been watching the inspection conducted by his chief butcher.

"The flesh of the white queen is of good texture," he announced. "It will be pleasing to the river gods that she die, and her flesh will be meat for the king's table."

Muto then gave Holton a less careful examination and made a similar announcement regarding the edible properties of Holton.

"Let them die, then," Ugu ordered, "when the sun of the new day comes."

He turned toward the exit into the main cavern, his retinue of subjects following.

When the procession had disappeared, Holton turned to Rosalie.

"We must make a determined effort to get out of here," he announced grimly.

"Better to die in the effort than to wait humbly to be led to the shambles," she said.

"We must get rid of these bonds again," he announced, and stooping, he attacked the knots about Rosalie's wrists with his teeth. Several minutes were required to gain the release of the girl, and she in turn released Holton from his bonds.

The latter walked to one of the three torches that were burning in niches in the wall. He put out the fire and began removing the charred fragments of wood. When he had completed the task he had a spear some four feet in length of solid wood with a hardened, needlelike point.

"If you know the direction in which to go after we emerge from this recess into the general cavern, to reach the exit into the fields above the river bluffs, I am determined to make an attempt."

"I know that," she replied.

"We shall wait until late in the night, when the guards at the entrance become drowzy," he announced. "All the other men of Ugu will be sleeping. It may seem foolish to make such an attempt, but it is a case of grasping at the last straw."

"Yes," she admitted, "it is our last chance."

13

When darkness had settled upon the city of Teeheemen, Benton, Otter and Gomo completed their preparations for the journey into the land of the river caves to attempt the rescue of their friend Holton and the daughter of Roderick Sharon.

From the defiances that had been hurled at the warriors of Duros before the walls of the city by the besieging dog men, they felt certain that the captives must be in the royal cavern of Ugu.

Benton, in addition to his rifle, carried three of his patent bombs, and Gomo had the rifle that had been furnished him by Benton, in addition to his spear.

"I shall carry the spear," the big native announced, "for it makes no noise when it kills and there may be places when silence will be important during the journey of the night."

The three did not emerge from the stone gate, but chose a point to be let down from the wall, where they calculated there would be the least possible danger of detection. Once without the walls, they took their way carefully across the outlying plain before the city. Not until they had reached the border of the dense jungle did they venture to speak.

When the heavy undergrowth was reached, Gomo, who knew the territory by night, immediately assumed the lead and the three hastened forward with all possible speed.

Before midnight, Gomo halted and pointed toward a ravine before them.

"The entrance from the fields is there," he said.

In silence the three crept forward and entered a large crevice in the rocky surface of the ground. They soon found themselves in the inner recesses of the cavern.

Benton utilized his flashlight until they arrived at a point indicated by Gomo as being near the place where they might expect to find the captives. From there the party felt its way forward in the darkness, fearing to utilize the flashlight because of the danger of detection.

A turn in the general direction of the cavern brought the glow of a torch in the distance to the view of the three.

"There," whispered Gomo, "is the prison chamber. Gomo believes that it is there we shall find the white woman and man."

Carefully the three crept forward. They noted that there were six men guarding the entrance. Two were standing and the other four were reclining about the mouth of the prison recess in various attitudes of ease.

The three were within fifty yards of the place when they noted a sudden commotion among the group of guards. They saw the figure of a seventh man leap among them and fell the two standing guards with separate blows from a bludgeon. The other four leapt to their feet and attacked the man, forcing him back into the recess from which he had emerged.

"It's Holton!" exclaimed Benton, running forward at full speed.

14

With the final decision to make an effort to escape by attacking the six guards when the best opportunity should present itself, Holton and Rosalie lay down on the skins that had been placed in the recess when it was first occupied by the girl. They talked for several hours about incidents of their lives during the past two years, and she told Holton of her capture by the claw men, who were accompanied by a number of other, larger men not of the claw species. From her description of them he judged that they must have been the remnant of the clan of Morop of the hollow mountain.

"What became of the other people you refer to?" Holton asked. "Do they live with the claw people in the river caves?"

"They are all dead," she answered. "Trouble occurred between the others and the claw people. The latter enslaved them as they had enslaved the men of Techeemen through their superiority in numbers. They have all died in the shambles of the butcher caves as food for the dog men."

Holton suggested to Rosalie that she try to sleep, assuring her that he would call when conditions were ripe for making their effort to escape.

The girl, who was exceedingly weary as the result of her strenuous and nerve-racking experiences during the past twenty-four hours, lay down on one of the tiger pelts. Holton watched her as she lay with her eyelids closed, and the rhythmic rise and fall of her shapely bosom told him that she was asleep.

For an hour he watched her, then his attention was turned to the guards at the entrance. All but two of them had stretched upon the floor at the entrance and were talking at times in tones not understood by Holton.

"It's a good time to attack them now," he soliloquized.

Then he viewed the sleeping figure of the girl and hesitated to awaken her.

"I'll let her sleep a little longer, for she needs the rest," he told himself.

Another hour passed and Rosalie stirred from her slumber. She sat up and rubbed her eyes with her right hand.

For a moment she looked at Holton with a puzzled expression, then the facts regarding her position began crowding their way again into her brain.

"The best time is now," Holton whispered. "The guards are drowzy, and only two of them are standing before the entrance."

"It is now or never," she said calmly, and at her statement the two arose. Holton extinguished the remaining torch without attracting the attention of the guards.

He stole toward the entrance with his recently fashioned spear in his hands. Rosalie followed close by.

Holton, when he was a few paces from the unsuspecting dog men, leapt upon them with terrific force, striking down his first man with a heavy blow from the torch spear. The second guard was handed a blow before he could recover from his surprize, and he, too, went down. The other four guards arose and rushed Holton back into the recess.

With his torch he knocked aside their spear thrusts but was gradually forced to give ground. They were backing him into the recess when three forms darted through the opening.

A spear pierced the vitals of one of the dog men as Gomo's unerring accuracy again manifested itself. Two others were pinioned by Otter and Benton on the spears they had picked up from the stunned guards lying before the entrance. The fourth was leapt upon by Gomo, who drove his knife into the man's heart with terrific force.

"Out of here, everybody," Benton ordered, and the four men with Rosalie Sharon rushed for the entrance to the recess.

As they approached the exit, one of the stunned guards, who had recovered from Holton's blow, rushed from the spot crying the alarm.

The party of five followed the route by which the three rescuers had entered the royal cavern. Benton threw the beams of his flashlight along the floor and all hastened as

rapidly as possible toward the field exit from the cavern of Ugu.

"There are probably no men of the enemy between here and the exit," announced Benton.

A wild howling of savage voices a short distance to the rear of the fleeing five announced that they were being pursued.

"The four of you proceed to the cavern mouth," Benton commanded, "and wait there for me if I do not overtake you. I am going to stop this pursuit."

As he spoke, Benton drew one of the bombs from his pack. He adjusted it to explode in twenty seconds, placed it, and raced after the others at top speed.

The force of the explosion threw him from his feet more than one hundred yards from the place, as giant rocks crumbled into the cavern way and closed the exit to the oncoming men of Ugu.

When Benton arrived at the cleft in the rocks leading into the fields, he found the others waiting for him.

"We must gain the cover of the jungle at once," he said. "The claw men will race for this point from the mouth of the cave at the river front if they are not already doing so."

The five ran across the fields toward the dark line of the jungle standing in gloomy outline in the light of the waning moon. The border was reached without any indications of pursuit and a straight line was followed toward the city of Teeheemen.

Before daybreak the five could discern the outline of the city's wall a half mile in the distance.

Gomo went forward to reconnoiter while the four remained hidden in a clump of brush on the sandy plain, which extended before the city toward the denser growth of jungle. A half hour later the big native returned.

"Our approach to the city is closed," he announced. "The men of Ugu have received heavy reinforcements since yesterday and are contemplating a tremendous assault early in the day."

"Then we cannot make the walls of the city without danger of being captured," said Otter. "If we break through the lines and reach the wall it is getting so light now that our approach will be observed by the enemy. Our recapture would be effected, as the dog men are so numerous that we should be overwhelmed."

"We cannot enter in that manner now," Benton agreed. "Our best plan is to cross the river of Teeheemen at once. We can approach the city from that side. Why cannot we enter through the place where the river flows into the sacrificial chamber of the temple of Teeheemen along the wall of the city at that point?"

"Our only danger will be that of being engulfed in the river as it enters the base of the mountain near the altar of the sacrificial room," Holton warned, "and that danger is indeed great. I agree with Benton, however, that it is our best plan at present. Anyhow, we should leave this vicinity at once, for to remain here means detection after daylight comes."

The five proceeded toward the river of Teeheemen, which ran toward the city a half mile from where the party had stopped. They proceeded with caution, as on several occasions their advance was halted by marching columns of dog-faced men.

The river bank was reached and the five paused.

"The river is narrow," Benton remarked, "but rather deep, and the current is swift."

"Do not let that worry you on my account," Rosalie said. "On more than one occasion I have swum this stream."

The men strapped their rifles to their backs, and the five plunged into the swiftly flowing stream just as the

first rays of the morning were lighting the crests of clouds gathered in the east.

The five swam together and reached the other side of the river without incident. They proceeded down the other side of the stream until they arrived opposite the place where the river touched the outer walls and finally entered the city through the wall of the temple of Teeheemen and disappeared into the earth.

"We must attract the attention of some of the men and signify our intention of entering by the river," said Holton. "If Duros or some of the others are at the place when we swim into the river, they can await our arrival in the temple and assist us in escaping death in the falls of the temple."

"Why not try attracting their attention with a shot?" Benton suggested. "To do so will also draw the attention of the claw men, but after we have been seen and recognized by the warriors of the city, then we can plunge in and swim toward the outer wall of the city and temple. They will discover our intention and give us aid, I am certain."

"There are but few of the warriors on this side of the city," said Gomo. "Duros knows there is no chance for the dog men to cross the river and scale the walls here. He has maintained but a handful of watchers on the side of the city protected by the river. The other two sides require all the men of Teeheemen. The rear of the city is protected by the unscalable walls of the mountain."

"If there are watchers on the walls, let us attract their attention, then," Holton urged, and raising his rifle he fired a shot.

As the sound of the report echoed across the river from the walls of the city of Teeheemen, a dozen warriors who had been reclining on the top of the parapets, rose to their feet. Holton and Benton motioned to them their intentions, and the five plunged into the waters of the stream, striking for the walls of the city at a point a hundred yards above the stream's entrance under the walls of the temple arch.

The astonished warriors on the wall understood what the five were attempting to do. They left the walls and hurried for the sacrificial room.

Otter was the first to approach the side of the stream where the water touched the walls of the city. Gomo was next, and Benton and Holton were each swimming a few strokes away from Rosalie Sharon.

As the entrance to the temple of Teeheemen was approached, the swiftness of the river current became greater. The five felt themselves carried along with tremendous velocity.

Under the great archway where the stream entered the temple they were swept struggling to keep above the water. Otter was the first to shoot toward the falls into the mountain base. Ten of the warriors had arrived at the place, and Otter grasped the butt of a long spear that was extended to him as he shot past toward the falls. Otter in turn extended his hand to Gomo, who grasped for Benton. The latter in turn clasped the hand of Rosalie Sharon, and Holton, making a last desperate effort to reach the shore, grasped the spear of another warrior who was standing far out into the water holding to the spear of yet another warrior.

With the aid of the others the human chain of exhausted men and Rosalie Sharon was dragged to the shore at a point just above the exit of the river over the falls into the abyss.

ROSALIE SHARON immediately expressed the desire to see her father. Gomo led her to a room in the temple and promised to find her

father and bring him to her. Otter, Benton and Holton went into an adjacent room and removed their clothes and wrung the water from them.

A half hour later, Gomo returned, piloting Roderick Sharon to the room of his daughter. There was a joyful outcry from the girl as she rushed to the arms of her father. For a long time they stood, clasped in each other's arms.

At the approach of Holton and the others they broke apart, and Sharon extended his hand with expressions of thanks to each of the three.

"But for you heroic gentlemen," he said, "Rosalie and I should never have been reunited."

"You owe us no thanks," Holton insisted. "We have done for you only what any men of red blood would have done. The danger of our position is not yet past. Gomo informs us that the men of Ugu are so overwhelming in numbers that they may break into the city upon their next assault. The chief of these people, Duros, has decided to act upon a former suggestion made by us and remove all of the noncombatants from the city into the recesses of the hollow mountain. Should it happen that the assault of the men of Ugu can no longer be resisted, then the army of Teeheemen can retreat through the streets to the entrance of the hollow mountain. They can hold the narrow entrance for weeks if it is necessary and thus allow the main body of the people time to effect an exodus into the fertile woods and plains of the adjoining country. I suggest, Sharon, that you and your daughter accompany the noncombatants."

"We shall do so if you deem it best," he agreed. "I am but a poor fighter myself."

Otter and Benton, with Gomo, left the chamber and proceeded toward the wall of the city in the vicinity of the stone gate. Holton paused for a moment until the arrival of the warriors who had been detailed by Gomo to accompany Sharon and his daughter into the mountain. "But what will become of you?" Rosalie asked, walking beside Holton as her father followed the warriors.

"I am going to help defend the walls of the city of Teeheemen," he answered.

"You will be in danger," she insisted, "and you have already done enough for these people."

"But they are my friends," he said. "I am ready to sell my life for friends if necessary."

"Are you more willing to do that than to preserve it for some who might be more than friends?" she questioned.

They paused in the corridor along which they had been walking. His eyes searched the ones she turned to meet his gaze.

"What do you mean, Rosalie," he queried, "by people who might be more than friends?"

A queer little smile played upon her upturned features as his hand touched her shoulder.

"I mean," she replied softly, "just me."

For a moment they stood while the footsteps of the others receded. He caught her in his arms for an instant and pressed a kiss upon her red lips.

"I never thought that such could be," he said, "but I have wished for this moment since I first saw you by the river before the prison caves."

"I have known it from the day you came to my rescue," she replied.

Together they continued along the corridor until they reached the front court of the temple. From there they joined the others waiting outside.

15

When Holton arrived at the top of the wall near the gate of the city, he found Benton and Otter. The

two had completed plans for giving the contemplated assault of the claw men a determined and destructive resistance.

Of the bombs that had been left with Duros, Benton gave two each to Otter and Holton and allowed Duros to retain two. Gomo was given the other and Benton retained the two that he had carried with him in the last trip to the royal cavern of Ugu.

The five took positions about one hundred yards apart on the top of the wall.

A quarter of a mile away the vast horde of dog-faced men was arranging for what was intended to be the last and overwhelming assault upon the walls of the city.

At a signal the watchers on the walls of Teeheemen saw more than twenty thousand of the savages come streaming toward the walls of the city. The second that the advancing host came into rifle range, the three whites with their guides began picking off the leaders.

Not dismayed by the loss of so many, the savages continued in their rush until the entire horde was at the foot of the walls, attempting to place their scaling poles in position.

The minute that the horde was crowded close against the walls, Benton cast one of his bombs into the thickest of the rabble before his sector of the wall. The spectacle that accompanied the explosion was horrifying. Hundreds of savages were killed, and greater numbers were stunned.

At another point along the wall, Otter cast one of his bombs with even more devastating effect, and almost immediately thereafter Holton hurled his deadly missile into a concentrated mob of savages before the wall where he was stationed. Duros and Gomo hurled their bombs after Holton.

The courage of the remaining warriors of Ugu was admirable. In the face of horrifying casualties they continued their attempt to scale the walls. The other bombs, except one in the possession of Benton, were cast into the mass of men below. At the explosion of the last one, the dog men appeared stunned by the resistance and began to retreat.

The men of Teeheemen poured from the city, leaving only enough men to man the walls in the event of a return attack of the enemy. They fell upon the wounded men before the walls and dispatched their enemies by the hundreds.

The army of Ugu withdrew to its old position. Benton, Otter, Holton and Duros held a council of war.

"Our supply of bombs is exhausted," Benton informed the chieftain of the Teeheemen. "We can no longer depend on saving the city in that manner. If we had a hundred of them we could exterminate the people of Ugu."

"They are still too powerful for us to attempt to resist their onslaughts with what few rifles we have," said Holton. "The front that we have to defend is entirely too long. If we could narrow our front we might think of continued successful resistance. Those devils out there are blessed with an unusual amount of grit. If they make another drive such as the last, they are bound to come inside, and the men of Duros are so outnumbered that the result cannot help but prove fatal."

Duros, who had remained silent, then spoke.

"Duros agrees with the white gods," he said. "Duros loves the city of Teeheemen and would gladly die if by so doing he could save the city and his people. But Duros knows that such would not be the case. Duros does not like to retreat, but that is the only way he can save his valuable warriors. He can lead his army through the hollow mountain into the jungle beyond,

but even then the dog men would follow. Duros must hold the entrance to the hollow mountain always with an army of warriors, while the others of his people dwell as did the men and women of Morop in the days of many suns ago. They will live in the hollow mountain and hunt in the world on the other side."

"Could not you build an impassable barrier across the entrance and shut the claw men into this valley forever?" suggested Otter.

"That would only furnish temporary safety," replied Duros. "The men of Ugu would carry away the barrier and follow the men of Teeheemen."

A messenger from the watchers on the walls before the river side of the city approached hurriedly.

"The men of Ugu are attempting to enter the city of Teeheemen," announced the warrior excitedly. "They are swimming the river by hundreds toward the entrance under the arch of the temple above the river."

Duros with the three white men ran toward the temple accompanied by a detachment of warriors whom Duros hastily summoned. When they entered the sacrificial room of the temple the vanguard of the swimming claw men was a hundred yards above the entrance.

"They will be unable to land here except by mere chance," remarked Holton, "without assistance from the shore. If it had not been for the long spears of the warriors we should have been carried into the exit abyss there."

"It will not require many warriors to hold this place against them," Benton agreed.

The first of the claw men came swimming under the archway. They were seized by the terrific undercurrent of the river and could not get closer than ten feet to the shore. With wild cries of terror they began pouring over the falls of the river exit into the base of the mountain. Several who were stronger swimmers than their fellows almost succeeded in effecting a landing, but these were thrust back into the torrent by the warriors of Duros with their spears, and continued over the falls, some with arms extended upright, others head foremost.

Seeing that the danger within the temple was of no consequence, Duros, with the three white men, returned again to the walls before the gate. They remained standing in silence, looking toward the lines of the men of Ugu in the distance. Far across the plain they could see reinforcements arriving for the claw men.

"The best plan is to evacuate at once," said Holton. "They are massing for another attempt, and I believe that it will be final this time."

Duros nodded.

"Such shall be the order of Duros," the chieftain spoke.

He summoned several of the nearby warriors and sent instructions along the line.

In accordance with the plans decided upon, the walls of the city were deserted gradually so that the fact would not be detected by the men of Ugu and precipitate an assault before the retirement had been fully accomplished. The greater mass of the warriors proceeded toward the entrance leading into the hollow mountain thirty minutes after the order had been received along the walls. About one hundred of the best fighters remained until the last, and these paraded about the tops of the parapets to continue the appearance of a general occupation of the defenses.

They later followed in a body, and Benton, Holton, Otter and Duros remained to watch the actions of the army on the plain before the nearly deserted city. An hour later the men

of Ugu rushed again toward the walls of Techeemen. At their first advance, the four watchers left the wall and fled to the opening into the hollow mountain.

"All of you except Holton proceed to the point where you intend to resist the advance through the cavern," Benton instructed. "I'm going to wait until they are almost here, then I'm going to plant my last bomb in position so as to wreck the inside of the mountain and close the opening to the advance of the savages."

The others followed Benton's instructions, and he and Holton remained. When they caught sight of the advancing forces of the claw men, they withdrew several hundred yards into the interior of the cavern, and Benton planted his bomb at a point calculated to bring a tremendous fall of rock. When he had placed the explosive, he set the time regulating key at its greatest extremity of two minutes and released it.

With Holton he fled as rapidly as possible toward the interior of the mountain.

No sooner had the two placed the last bomb than hundreds of the claw men began filing into the cavern. They were rapidly approaching the spot where several hundred of the best warriors of Teeheemen, with Duros and the members of the Holton party, were awaiting their approach.

Benton and Holton had just reached the place selected for resisting the advance into the hollow mountain, when there was a terrific roar in the far recesses of the cavern. The mountain shook about the feet of the men of Duros.

Upon the multitude of claw men filing through the cavern, thousands of tons of rock came crushing, blotting out the lives of hundreds of the savages and making a barrier several hundred feet in thickness.

When the force of the explosion had subsided, the Duros detachment advanced to exterminate the savages that had passed the point where the explosion occurred. About one hundred of them had escaped the collapse of the mountain from the explosion and the major number of these were lying stunned upon the floor. The clearing of the cavern was a short task for the Duros men.

When the last of the claw men had been dispatched, the army turned and marched into the center of the mountain. The other remnant of the inhabitants of the city of Teeheemen were camped about the old village of Morop. Roderick Sharon, with Rosalie, was occupying one of the huts, and as the detachment filed into the camp they came out of their quarters and hailed the three white men.

Holton advanced to Rosalie and clasped the hand she extended to him.

"We are safe now," he assured her. "Our exodus from the land of Teeheemen will begin tomorrow."

Turning to Benton he remarked, "There is just one regret I have over the entire trip, and that is I shall be unable to take any evidence of the beast teeheemen with me to the states."

"I have a dozen different poses of his majesty, taken following his death," said Benton. "The camera is yours and is in one of the packs carried by our guides. It will be a lot easier to carry the camera plates with us than a stack of hide and bones from the monster."

Holton expressed his delight over the information.

"My trip here is complete," he said.

When the sun again brought light to the forests adjoining the mountainbound Valley of Teeheemen, a long procession of men, women and children emerged from a cavern in

the side of one of the mountains and began marching across the rock-strewn, sandy plain toward the edge of the distant jungle.

Four white men, accompanied by a young woman dressed in a one-piece trapping fashioned from the skin of a saber-tooth tiger, emerged with the procession.

They appeared strangely out of place with the wild-appearing, olive-colored men of Teeheemen.

Across the barren stretch of ground they followed with the procession, until the jungle border was reached. Before they plunged into the denser growth they paused for a time to view again the land they were leaving.

Herman Van Otter turned to Benton and Holton with a smile on his good-natured face.

"It's been a great land for you two," he said jokingly. "You each found a mate, but as for me, there's nothing left in the land of Teeheemen but women with claws."

[THE END]

NOTE: The preceding chapters of "The Last of the Teeheemen" were printed in the March issue of WEIRD TALES. *The first of the Teeheemen stories, called "The Valley of Teeheemen," appeared serially in* WEIRD TALES *for December, 1924, and January, 1925. Copies of any of these issues will be mailed by the publishers on receipt of 25 cents each.*

Coming Soon!

Three Powerful Novelettes

The Werewolf of Ponkert

By H. WARNER MUNN

Being the Werewolf's Own Story

The White Queen of the Corolans

By ARTHUR THATCHER

Author of the Teeheemen Stories

The Gargoyle

By GREYE La SPINA

A Startling Tale of Devil-Worship

Watch For These Stories in WEIRD TALES!

A Dream-Tale of Crime

THE WHITE SCAR

By NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE

AM I crazy? I do not think so—but I do not know. Anyhow, I am in an asylum for the hopelessly insane. I was sent here a long time ago, weeks or months or years, I cannot say. Time has lost its meaning for me as far as calendars are concerned: the interminable days, the intolerable nights, are all merged into chaos. Out of it but one thought, one hope, comes clear: the longing for death.

Only dimly do I recall my last experience among sane men—when I was on trial for the murder of Buck Gordon, a man whom I had never known, had never even seen until the moment my hands closed about his throat. I am glad I killed him, unutterably glad; the one joy of my wretched existence is the memory of those bulging, bloodshot eyes, that rasping death-gurgle as the breath went out of Gordon's body.

I was stunned by the verdict the jury brought in, by the judge's words that followed it. I had hoped and prayed for the chair; my mission had been accomplished and I was prepared to face my Creator. I shall never forget the sick desolation that swept over me when I learned that I was not to die after all. And so I exist on and on—a thing: a living dead creature among scores of other living dead creatures, yet certain in my heart that I am absolutely sane. You, who may read this, shall decide!

This is my story. . . .

AT TWENTY-EIGHT I married Dorothy Wayne. I had adored her for years. Ours was an ideal union; we were not only lovers; we were friends—pals. I suppose our happiness was almost too perfect to last in a hard, ruthless world. We shall find it again—in heaven; nothing can cheat me of this belief.

Just a year after our wedding day, a telegram announcing the serious illness of my wife's mother, down in Louisiana, came to me. I dreaded to convey these tidings to Dorothy in her frail condition. But I had no right to withhold such information, and so I hurried home at once with the message. She was very composed, very brave, but equally determined in her purpose to start south at once. It was impossible for me to accompany her, owing to important deals pending; and with a heavy heart I drove her to the station and kissed her goodbye, little dreaming that I was never to see her again.

For the first few weeks Dorothy wrote daily the bright, loving letters that were so much a part of her happy, radiant self. Then suddenly the letters ceased. Days passed. She had written that her mother was improving, that she would be able to start for home soon and would advise me by wire. Yet a week went by and no wire came. Restless at first, I grew anxious, and finally downright alarmed. Unable to bear the suspense, but trying to laugh at my own fears, I dispatched a message myself to the Louisiana address. An answer came late in the afternoon of the same day, announcing that Dorothy had left Gretna for New York almost a week before.

I was like a wild man. What was

the meaning of it all? Where was she? What had happened?

I threw down everything and took the first train south.

Investigations were futile. Mrs. Wayne had died suddenly while I was en route to Gretna, and the daughter with whom she was making her home (Dorothy's elder sister) could tell me only that my wife had called a taxi on Tuesday night and started for the station. There was no clue to identify the driver, and a thorough probing failed to reveal anything on which to work. It was as if the earth had opened and swallowed her up and the whole world was a sphinx!

The wonder to me now is that in those first few days I did not go quite mad; yet I didn't. Perhaps it was the desperate necessity for clear thought, for action, that steadied my brain and my nerves. Hope buoyed me up in the beginning, but as the mystery became denser, blanker, and more baffling, I saw myself changing into the pitiful wreck of what I once had been.

I roved from place to place, unshaven, unkempt, with only one purpose in life: to find my wife, alive or dead. I had sacrificed my entire business interests for what cash I could recover, to keep me fed and clothed while I pursued my desperate quest. Police, detectives, had exhausted their ingenuity and dismissed the case. But every minute, every day, every year, as long as I breathed, my life would be devoted to digging out the truth—and to revenge. I was certain she had been murdered, for by no mere accident could such a complete disappearance have come to pass. And no evil or treacherous design could have lurked in the heart of the woman I loved, and who loved me: of that I was even surer.

Not once, nor twice; but hundreds and hundreds of times I went over the same ground, convinced that sooner or later some unguarded word or circumstance would betray some vague hint of a clue. Apparently the world had wondered nine days, and then forgotten the tragedy of my poor little Dorothy's strange disappearance. But as time wore on, the poignancy, the ghastliness grew more and more acute in my own heart.

At thirty-five I was an old man: my hair had turned snow-white: my shoulders sagged; my hands were palsied; my voice was hollow and cracked. But inside were blazing still those deathless, consuming fires—fires that seemed to gather fresh force with every passing day.

I began to be shunned by fastidious passers-by, regarded with suspicion by all with whom I came in contact, or pitied by the few who were perhaps kinder of heart. I was now merely a vagabond, caring nothing for snubs or slights, every conscious feeling merged into the one imperishable purpose for which I lived.

Toward the end of the seventh summer of my wanderings, I found myself back once more on familiar Louisiana soil. I had traveled all the way from Memphis along the river banks, begging my way now, for my last hoarded funds were gone and there was little work I could find, or do. Weary and footsore from a whole day's uninterrupted trudge, with only a meal of wild grapes for sustenance, I felt my knees tremble and sink beneath my frail weight. I was in the heart of a wilderness. Following the torrid day, a lashing rain had set in. In a little while came night, impenetrable as ink.

A quarter hour's blind search brought me, drenched and shivering, to an old, abandoned, tumbledown shack close to the edge of the swirling Mississippi. I forced one of the rickety windows and, clambering inside, I dropped helpless to the floor. I must have lain unconscious for a long time, for the next thing I knew,

a clock somewhere was booming midnight. The sound seemed to come from a distance, and it was oddly familiar. Then I remembered: it was the town-bell—at Gretna—and this was an old-time shrimpers' haunt, deserted now for more modern equipment. My skin was parched, and it burned like flame, and my eyes seemed to be coals of fire dancing about in my head. My tongue was hot, thick, swollen; yet icy rigors shook me convulsively. I was ablaze with fever. I wondered dimly if this were to be the end of my pilgrimage. . . . a drowzy lethargy . . . and blankness. . . .

I was roused from my coma by a woman's shrill, terrified scream. The scream was followed immediately by a succession of short, choking, gurgling sounds, then a man's fiendish, exultant laugh, almost a snarl; and gloating, savage words:

"Mine at last, my pretty Dot! Scorned me, did you, for the fine New Yorker who stole you from me? I promised you I'd pay—remember? Stop that squealing, damn you—the river sharks are playing around tonight—they'll manage so's *he'll* not get you again—and in an hour's time I'll be hauling passengers just the same as usual."

I tried to move. I was paralyzed. I attempted to cry out but no sound left my stiff lips. And then, of a sudden, before I could free my limbs from that deadly atrophy, before even thought might be framed, there came more cries, even more terrible than those that had gone before—frightened, almost unrecognizable—but unmistakably belonging to—*her*.

Great God! Dorothy—my wife—murdered before my very eyes and I helpless—moveless—dumb!

There was the sickening bump of a body against the floor, and a man's maniacal laughter. Then suddenly the heavens parted in a lurid flash and I saw, not the woman's face, nor the man's, but a pair of huge, hairy arms, folded triumphantly over a bulging, naked and equally hairy chest. On the left forearm was a large jagged scar in the shape of a cross, clearly visible against the hirsute blackness of the rest of the limb.

A simultaneous crash of thunder shook the battered old structure and split it like an eggshell. I sat up, cold with perspiration, straining my eyes through the blackness, straining my ears in a tense horror of expectancy. But all I could see now was the dense blackness of the night; and all I could hear was the weird shrieking of the wind in the trees.

My delirium had passed, but still rigid in the grip of that horrible nightmare, I huddled in a corner of the wrecked shanty and waited for dawn. Eternities passed, then slowly, after the storm, a soft, pink glow in the east heralded daylight.

It was little more than an hour's walk to the outskirts of Gretna; but horror lent speed to my trembling limbs, and despite my physical weakness, I made it in much less time. I needed food, sorely. If I could not earn it, or beg it, then I should have to steal it.

Suddenly I came upon a group of laborers gathered about a corner grocery, waiting for the factory whistle to summon them to work.

I approached timidly; perhaps in the crowd someone would be kind enough to give me the price of a meal!

"Hey, Old Timer! Kinder need a shave, don't you?"

Their jeers affected me little. I replied as kindly as I could:

"Perhaps, but right now I need something else more: I am hungry. I have had no food for forty-eight hours."

A pleasant-faced young fellow instantly produced his dinner-pail.

"Help yourself, mister. You're welcome to it all."

After I had eaten, I sat down among them to rest.

"Looks like you've had a night of it, Colonel; which way'd you come?" asked one of the men.

"I spent the night at an old shack down by the river side, about three miles away, I reckon."

Instantly eight pairs of bulging eyes were riveted on me.

"Good Lord, man; you ain't tellin' us you stayed all night at the haunted house, are you?"

"Why do you call it that?" I asked, recalling with a shiver my frightful nightmare.

"Well," the speaker went on; "all the folks who useter live in that direction have moved away. Ain't a soul stayed near it since that night when Miss Polly Simms told she heard a woman screamin'—years ago. . . ."

"Shut up, Bill. Polly Simms was an old fool. You ain't gettin' superstitious, are you?"

I put my hand to my head.

"A woman screaming." . . . there was something queer . . . my thoughts muddled. . . .

Then the factory whistle sounded and there was a scuffling to be off. I, too, rose, not knowing what else to do.

One of the men, a big, burly ruffian, turned to me with a leer.

"Come on down and we'll get you a job as water-boy, Old Top."

Guffawing at his own wit, the speaker flourished a brawny arm and finished his laugh with a grin of derision.

For a second I stood petrified, the blood freezing about my heart.

"Come along, Buck. Ain't you got no sense? Let the gentleman be."

BEFORE Buck Gordon could speak, could move, I was upon him with the savage ferocity and strength of a wild beast, notwithstanding my weakened and broken condition. My hands were on his throat; my clawlike fingers sank into the thick red flesh.

For on that bare and hairy arm, clearly visible against the hirsute blackness, was *a jagged white scar in the shape of a cross!*

"Damn you . . . damn you . . . I've got you at last . . . Thank God! Dorothy Wayne is—avenged. . . ."

Buck Gordon was quite dead when they finally loosened my fingers from his throat. He lay in an inert heap on the sun-seared grass, his tongue hanging in a purple lump from the swollen lips. His terror-glazed eyes popped from their sockets.

For one tense, triumphant, never to be forgotten second I stood there looking down at my handiwork. For the first time in long years I knew relief—and joy. I cared very little what happened now; for my mission was accomplished.

Then the world swam round; everything went black and my knees gave under me. Rough hands laid hold of me . . . and utter blankness.

THOSE endless days in my narrow prison cell, waiting, hoping, praying for the trial and the sentence that would bring death and reunion with my beloved—my cruelly murdered little Dorothy—waiting for me—up there. . . .

"Paranoia," they call it. And instead of the longed-for chair to set me free, I must spend the remainder of my wretched days in a padded cell. How many of them have come and gone, I do not know; how many are still to come and go, who shall say?

I am writing this purely as an outlet to feelings that sooner or later must drive me mad if I held them in any longer. If my poor narrative, my pitiful story, should ever find its way into print, it may be there is someone who will understand.

Am I crazy? I do not think so; but I do not know.

The Welcome This Convict Received Was Not What He Had Expected

Grisley's Reception

By WILLIAM SANFORD

Author of "Hootch" and "The Scarlet Night"

JOE GRISLEY, convicted wife slayer, and more beast than man, was making his escape from a life sentence in prison.

He had served a little more than a year, and hardly for a moment during all that time was his mind free from the thought of escape. Then the knowledge that perhaps he was to escape came to him suddenly, when one day a woman, associate of his in bygone days, came to the cells and began to pass out small cakes to the prisoners. She was accompanied by the warden, who seemed quite free from any suspicion as to who she really was—a woman of the underworld.

Although Grisley did not know it, the visitor, who had once been his woman, and wanted him again for her mate, had been working for his escape for some time. Posing as one interested in the welfare of prisoners, she had made many visits to the prison with cakes, fruit and magazines, until at last she gained the utter confidence of the warden, and the edibles were not probed into for possible tools for escape, and she was allowed to distribute them to the prisoners herself.

It was after her third personal visit to the cells that Grisley, eagerly breaking open his cake for that which he knew he would sometime find, drew forth a tiny saw with an edge that would bite into the hardest steel—an edge cut into steel itself as hard as criminal ingenuity could produce.

The visits of the woman continued. Other saws came to Grisley, that he might always work with keen tools. He concealed these tiny instruments in the mattress of his bed, when danger was near. He worked only when he was doubly positive that he would not be detected. He covered up his efforts with soap, over which he rubbed dust.

The work on the bars of his window passed day by day unnoticed. And work was slow, for the bars were tough, and even those saws in which so much skill had been used bit only little by little into the hard steel. It was a full month before Grisley had completed the work. The bars of the window on one side had been sawed completely through, flush to the wall; on the other side they had been sawed almost through, so that Grisley knew he could bend them back when the time came to escape.

And now with the prison clock tolling the hour of 2 in the morning, and with the knowledge, conveyed by a note in one of the cakes, that the woman would be waiting not far from the outer wall of the prison with an automobile, Grisley was ready. He knew the woman would be there. He had given her the sign that it would be about 2 o'clock in the morning; had given it to her when she had called late the previous afternoon—the sign she had been waiting for ever since he had got the note.

Grisley had tied all his bed clothing together, and into the crook of the al-

most severed bars which he had bent he had fastened one end of his line. He knew they would stand the strain. The line would reach about thirty feet. There would still be about twenty feet to the ground, but Grisley was an old hand at long drops. He knew he would land safely.

He knew something else, too, and it had filled him with joy, a joy that still pulsed through his body. Something was wrong with the electric lights about the prison yard. They were out, and the yard was in blackness; but he knew it would only be a matter of a few minutes before they would be on again: there would be quick work to locate the trouble and remedy it; meanwhile Grisley wanted to land in that yard and scale the prison wall. He was confident that he could. He had several times escaped from prison when sentenced for minor charges.

Standing on top of the bed, on which he had stood while working all those weary hours with the tiny saws, he doubled himself up like a jackknife and worked his wiry little body, feet first, through the opening. It was a tight squeeze. Had he been a trifle larger he could not have made it. Grasping his line firmly, he began to descend.

The bars had not allowed Grisley to see directly under his window, but his line of vision began some thirty feet out from the prison wall. Workmen had been laying an asphalt surface about the prison, replacing the gravel that had extended out to where the grass began. Grisley had seen the men at work, and the odor of the scented asphalt had been wafted into his cell all the previous day. Now, as he descended, it came up to him more strongly. It was a pleasant odor to his nostrils—it breathed of the outdoors and freedom.

Down — down — down — he went, only a few feet more of line remaining. He reached the end, stiffened his body for the drop and looked below. It was still as dark as pitch, but any moment the guard might appear with his lantern. One second more he held on, then closed his eyes and let go.

The automobile with the woman of the underworld at the wheel waited in vain for Grisley, the wife murderer. He did not scale the prison wall. He did not even reach it. He landed feet first in the five-foot vat of melted asphalt. The fire in the box below the vat had long since gone out, and the asphalt in the vat had thickened. It was getting thicker all the time; and try as he would, Grisley could not draw himself out of it: the impetus from the twenty-foot drop had been sufficient to sink him to the bottom.

And it was there that a guard found him a short time later, up to his shoulders in the slowly hardening asphalt. The warden, when he arrived, was angry enough to order a fire built in the box below the vat to soften up the asphalt for Grisley to get out. He added that this would save the workmen the trouble of getting the asphalt melted into liquid form again when they arrived to resume work.

But Grisley begged so piteously when he heard the suggestion that the warden finally ordered that he be dug out with spades.

LETTERS are still coming in to The Eyrie begging the editors of WEIRD TALES not to heed the advice of those readers who want the magazine to cease printing horror stories. Though the objections were in most cases directed against extreme tales of disgusting topics such as blood-drinking and body-eating, nevertheless *some* of our readers were insistent that we should absolutely eliminate all stories that might be considered gruesome by even the most fastidious. To those who want WEIRD TALES to cease being weird, we are forced to say that this magazine is printed for the benefit of its readers, and the great majority of you, so far as we can judge, want WEIRD TALES to remain weird.

When the new owners of this magazine came into possession last autumn, their first act was to put the question squarely up to the readers as to what kind of stories they wanted. The response was overwhelming: "Give us stories that are in accord with the title of the magazine; give us bizarre, uncanny tales that will make us lie awake at night, tales such as we cannot get in any other magazine." At the same time, there were many letters protesting against "nauseating" stories; and we have kept the magazine free from such tales.

A theme can be unpleasant, and yet handled well. As a test of reader sentiment, we printed in our February issue the vampire story, *Four Wooden Stakes*, by Victor Rowan. It was highly praised by many of our readers, and not one letter has been received condemning it because of its theme. (As a sign of the times, it might be mentioned that Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, which is without doubt the most gruesome, horrifying and fascinating vampire tale ever printed, went into two new editions in this country during 1924.)

M. H. Wender, of Oak Hill, West Virginia, states the case for those who want truly weird tales. He writes to The Eyrie: "I am writing this in fear of losing the only magazine that can really be called unusual. I have noticed in several issues lately where some of your readers are requesting a discontinuance of the stories bordering on the ghastly to extremes, and some even go so far as to request (or almost) a stop to any story that appears to be weird. Haven't we enough Blue-Noses in this country trying to stop everything and anything that pretends to give pleasure to us poor humans, without their trying to bust up the only real magazine ever printed? I say, give us the real scary kind, the kind you lie awake until midnight reading, and stay awake the rest of the night because you cannot sleep. And for those who want

something different, let them buy that kind of magazine, for goodness knows there are enough others on the market."

WEIRD TALES will remain what its name implies, and print gooseflesh stories; tales of the supernatural; tales of the bizarre and unusual; tales of the monstrosities of ancient legend—ghouls, ghosts, familiars, vampires, werewolves, witchcraft, devil-worship; occult and mystic tales; unusual tales of crime; tales of horror such as made the fame of Poe; tales of the marvelous possibilities of inventive genius and scientific research; tales of the outer spaces of the universe; tales that plumb the future with the eye of prophecy; and tales of thrills and mystery, as well as good romantic and humorous tales with a weird slant. And we will print these tales for their value as stories, regardless of whether their authors are famous or not. WEIRD TALES plays no favorites; and it means more to us to discover a new author who can write thrilling tales than to print a merely "good" tale by the most celebrated author in the world. The story is the thing, and not the name of the author.

The readers' favorite story in the February issue of WEIRD TALES was *Whispering Tunnels,* by Stephen Bagby; and not far behind it in popularity was *The Statement of Randolph Carter,* by H. P. Lovecraft.

Lieutenant Arthur J. Burks, the genial author of the series of *Strange Tales From Santo Domingo,* was so fascinated by Mr. Bagby's story that he hauled out his trusty typewriter and wrote a letter to the editor about it. Says the lieutenant: "The January issue was better, but I have this to say about the February issue: *Whispering Tunnels* is the first story that ever kept me awake after I had hit the hay. The writing might not have been the best in the world, but I'll wager the story as a whole will register away out in the lead in your popularity voting contest. I am voting this time—for *Whispering Tunnels.*"

On the other hand, H. P. Tead, of Decatur, Illinois, writes: "In the February issue *The Statement of Randolph Carter,* by H. P. Lovecraft, so far outshines all the other stories that there is simply no comparison whatever. The author may well be proud of this. It is worthy of Poe, the master, and if it had been printed as one of his hitherto unpublished tales, I doubt if anyone could have told the difference."

Howard Anderson (we have mislaid the envelope telling what city he is from) votes for Mr. Lovecraft's story, but adds: "He should go further into the story and explain the mystery." The very thing that Mr. Anderson thinks is a defect is praised by another reader, Ward Motz, who writes: "The best of this was that Mr. Lovecraft left something to the imagination. I believe that is one failing in most stories: they go too far. Personally I would rather have a little left for my imagination." Mr. Motz adds, regarding David Baxter's snake story, *The Brown Moccasin,* in the same issue: "Never since the death of F. St. Mars have I read a better story of natural life, and not only the story, but the style. Let's have more of his stories."

William A. P. White, of San Rafael, California, writes: "I wish to commend very much the policy of your magazine. Please get more stories by Ramòn de las Cuevas, Stephen Bagby, and the author of *Invaders From Outside.*"

George W. Booth, of Milwaukie, Oregon, takes issue with the remarks of a reader who (in The Eyrie) asked that we cease publishing necrophilic stories. Mr. Booth writes: "I think it would be very bad indeed for

WEIRD TALES to accept the advice of L. Phillips, Jr., of Berkeley, California, to cut out tales of the grave and the dead. I'm sure it doesn't hurt the dead any to write fiction concerning the grave." He adds that "H. P. Lovecraft and Alice I. Fuller are reaching out for the laurels of Poe."

Mrs. Jean Hursh, of San Francisco, writes: "I have just finished reading and rereading the latest copy of WEIRD TALES in an endeavor to decide which story pleased me the most. They are each one so interesting that it is a difficult question to decide. I think it is the very best copy that has yet been published, and I can scarcely say which I like better—*Whispering Tunnels* by Stephen Bagby or *A Broken Lamp-Chimney* by Arthur J. Burks, but after considerable thinking I believe *A Broken Lamp-Chimney* is the best of all."

Just what story do YOU consider the best in this issue? Send in the name of your favorite to The Eyrie, WEIRD TALES, 317 Baldwin Building, Indianapolis, Indiana. This is your magazine, and we want to know which stories you prefer, so that we can keep the magazine in accord with your wishes. And if there are stories in this issue that you do not like, tell us about them. We want to know what you think of us, for better or for worse.

W. R. Gass, of Knoxville, Tennessee, writes: "In all sincerity I wish to say that WEIRD TALES is all that its name implies; please keep it the same. In short, it is the only magazine I have ever read that once I begin, it is hard for me to quit until I have read *all* the stories. The more weird, the merrier for me."

C. O. Hesselberth, of Toluca, Illinois, writes: "Your unique magazine fills a gap in modern literature better than any other attempt has ever done, and I must add that some of the excellent tales, such as those by H. P. Lovecraft, must, I feel, go down as classics with the immortal Poe."

Ralph Roberts, of Los Angeles, fears the magazine may fall away from its standard, and writes: "Do not change the principle of your wonderful magazine for the few who cannot stand good eery fiction. Keep the magazine weird."

Frederic Raynbird, a farmer at Bulwark, Alberta, writes: "Have just discovered WEIRD TALES at the local store, and now I'll never be without it. It surely is a right royal diversion from the ordinary."

Harold S. Farnese, of Los Angeles, writes: "I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your magazine. It may not suit everybody's taste, but it is a great relief from mushy love-stories, Western thrillers, and the money magazines in which millionaires confide in an unsophisticated public how they managed to pile up their millions. Louise Garwood's *Fayrian*, in the February issue, is a marvel of stylistic dexterity and reads like a poem."

But here we have come to the end of The Eyrie, without letting you see a tithe of the letters we have received. Just a word in closing: in next month's issue some of the biggest guns will roar for the delectation of the readers of WEIRD TALES. In addition to Burks, Owen and Quinn, you will have stories by the four big L's—La Spina, Leahy, Long and Lovecraft. Leahy has not appeared in these columns since the concluding installment of his serial novel, *Draconda*, in the Anniversary Issue. He has a short story this time—a pseudo-scientific tale called *The Voices From the Cliff*.

Are You Eager to Become Rich?

MONEY is not the only kind of wealth. Mental riches are as important to the welfare of mankind as the piling up of gold. Such riches can be acquired only by acquaintance with the very best of contemporary literature.

No magazine in the world prints so many stories of absolute literary value as does WEIRD TALES.

$75.00 Worth $2.50 *for*

A TWELVE-MONTH subscription to WEIRD TALES offers you more than you could buy, if published separately, for at least thirty times the price. The next twelve issues of this most unusual magazine promise you a quantity, quality and variety of interesting entertainment and information that will supply you with many evenings of pleasure.

Each issue contains from fifteen to twenty-five short stories, novels and novelettes by the best authors. *Compared with the value,* the price is ridiculously small—over 250 stories for $2.50 figures less than 1 cent per story of fascinating—mysterious—thrilling—gripping fiction.

Subscribe now while our address is before you. Don't put it off another day!

Use the coupon

WEIRD TALES
317 Baldwin Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.
Gentlemen: Enclosed find $_____ for 1 year's subscription to WEIRD TALES to begin with the _____ number.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

(Price in Canada $3.00)

The Lure of Atlantis

(*Continued from page* 24)

"Why?" I asked, somewhat testily, though never before had I questioned his decisions.

"It is exhausting work," he replied, "and we do not know how long we can stay here before there may be a storm, in which case we may have to up anchor and run before it. I think we can work best by going down in turn, I today, you tomorrow."

His reasoning seemed wholly specious, but I assented sullenly.

Throughout the four hours of his trip below I lived in torture. I thought of him down there walking through those magnificent halls, enjoying the wonders of Atlantis, the attractions of the ancient chapel, the charm of that smiling beauty there in her crystal tomb. Vaguely I wondered what he would bring up with him, and you may guess that I was somewhat startled when he came up, as he had gone down, with nothing at all.

That night, for the first time in our long friendship, we had harsh words in his cabin. I upbraided him for bringing up none of the jewels, pointing out that even if he himself had no need for further wealth, some of the rest of us were poor men and could put them to good use. My remark seemed to anger him greatly, and he lost himself in a mighty gust of wrath.

"They are not ours," he thundered, towering over me. "Not one jot nor tittle of them shall we take! They are hers. They belong to Wynona. You shall not have them."

"You are mad!" I raged. "You are inhumanly selfish! You at least owe it to these poor men aboard, who could be made independent for life. It is not within your right to deny them."

All my raging was of no avail, and the next morning I was only partly surprized, though greatly angered, when he told me curtly that only he would go beneath the waters. And for another four hours I sat there on the decks of the *Nautilus*, suffering the tortures of the damned. And again he came up empty-handed.

That night we went at it again over the teacups. I raged, I tore, I stamped about the room; but he answered me with gentle words, or, more often, not at all. For the most part he was peculiarly silent, almost uncannily pleasant. When I had finished my tirade he got up, but paused on the threshold of his cabin.

"Fear not," he said with a peculiarly quiet smile, "they shall have everything. Every foot of Atlantis shall be theirs. They shall climb its hills, wander through its halls, sun themselves on its terraces. They shall know its every beauty, all its wealth. But for you, my friend, I can promise nothing. You are not wanted down below."

His cryptic remark startled me, and I began to wonder if he were not a little mad.

That night I lay awake through all the long hours until dawn, thinking not of the jewels, of the wealth in Atlantis, but only of Wynona. At dawn I slept a little, and she came in all her gorgeous beauty and mocked me there in my cabin. That day, I vowed, it should be I who would go below.

In that I was vastly mistaken, however. We quarreled at the rail just before he went over, but he brushed me back and plunged into the sea. I saw his face, laughing up in derision through the glass of his helmet, as he slowly sank from sight.

For perhaps an hour I sat there by the rail, until the strain became no longer endurable. Then it was that

the bonds of my respect to Dr. Tyrrel's judgment were broken and I realized, of a sudden, that there was nothing to keep me from going down even against his wishes. Thinking thus I got myself into my diving dress and slipped over the side.

I landed, by good luck, about halfway up the stairs to the temple. There again before me I saw that accursed seaweed, but I spurned it quickly aside and climbed the stairs. At the entrance the wretched stuff attempted to bar my way, but I drew my knife and slashed at it until it drew back. Then I walked into the foyer and from thence into the chapel.

Somehow I knew I should find him there, and I was not disappointed. As the details at the farther end of the hall were revealed to me through the dimness, I saw him kneeling before that altar with his head down across her crystal tomb, his face, behind the glass in his helmet, pressed close to hers. And then I knew that I hated him—hated him because he loved her, and because I loved her, and because in some way I knew he was the favored one. For the first time I realized that I, too, had cared nothing for the jewels; that I, too, would have scorned to rifle her chapel. Always it had been Wynona, and now he had taken her from me! I hated him with every spark of my soul, every fiber of my being.

"Dastard!" I shrieked. "Thus you have beguiled your time; thus you have hoodwinked us all!"

I had forgotten that the sound could not penetrate beyond the confines of my helmet, and now it echoed and re-echoed in my steel-and-rubber prison, ringing and screeching in my ears until the very blood seemed to well up into my eyes and the sea before me was as scarlet.

Without thought of what I was about to do I pushed forward, knife in hand. I would kill him there; I

Using Tobacco

Perhaps you've tried to stop using tobacco only to find that the habit has such a hold on you that you gave up trying.

You know, better than anyone else that you ought to stop because, sooner or later, it is bound to undermine your health. Heart trouble, indigestion, dyspepsia, nervousness, insomnia, poor eye sight—these and many other disorders, can often be traced directly to the use of tobacco. Besides it is an expensive, utterly useless habit.

Habit Banished

Let Us Help You

No matter how firm a grip tobacco has on you—no matter whether you've been smoking cigars, pipe or cigarettes or chewing plug or fine cut for a month or 50 years—Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a very few days. It does its work so quickly that all tobacco "hunger" is gone almost before you know it. The desire for a smoke or a chew usually begins to decrease after the very first dose.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind—it is in no sense a tobacco substitute. It does not cause the slightest shock to the nervous system; on the contrary, it often helps to quiet the nerves and make you feel better in every way.

SEND Coupon for Proof Get our free booklet. Tells you all about the deadly effects of tobacco and how easy it is now to quit. We will also send you copies of letters from confirmed users telling how this simple, home-treatment freed them absolutely from the habit. Just mail coupon—or a postal will do.

NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.
Dept. 762 St. Louis, Mo.

Send, without obligation to me in any way, proof that Tobacco Redeemer will positively free me from the Tobacco Habit or my money will be refunded.

Name.....

Street and No.....

Town.....State.....

GET A SWEETHEART. Our Illustrated Magazine is full of them. Many very rich. 10c copy. Cupid's Bulletin. (WT) New Haven, Conn.

would cut him down with as little compunction as I had the seaweed before the portals. But I must be crafty! I had no intention of giving him a chance in fair fight! I would walk up behind him and strike with my knife through the rubber joints at his throat, rip the blade downward to his breast, and leave him there either to drown or bleed to death. How I would laugh as he died there at the feet of his beauty! What an outcome for his secret tryst!

And then a very strange thing happened. There was no way under heaven that he could have known of my approach, for he was kneeling with his back toward me. There was nothing to warn him, no sound from me that could have penetrated that watery space to the ears within his helmet. Yet, while I was still twenty feet away, I saw him get slowly to his feet and turn about, his hand going to the knife at his belt even before he could have realized my purpose.

Thus confronted, I brandished my weapon and bade him in our sign language to be prepared, since I intended to kill him or die in the attempt. Scarcely had I finished, when to my utter astonishment he slowly replaced the knife in its sheath and quietly awaited my coming.

Taken back though I was, I had no intention of losing my purpose. His very sureness enraged me the more. I strode forward, bending all my weight against the intervening water, holding my blade in readiness.

Now I stood before him, and saw his white, sneering face behind the glass. Shrieking aloud with a strange exultation, I raised my weapon to strike. But I never made that stroke. Even as my arm descended in its murderous errand, I felt myself suddenly and helplessly snatched away.

It was that accursed seaweed! The damnable stuff had twined about my body as I strode across the hall; and now, as I drew near enough to plunge my weapon home, it had snatched me away. In vain I foamed and fought it, slashing to the right and to the left. In vain I ripped and tore and cut, using my gloved hands where the blade seemed too slow. Where I slashed off yards of the stuff, new tendrils seemed to grow, enveloping my body.

Frothing and screaming, kicking and squirming, I was dragged across the hall and out on the steps before the temple. There, despite my weights, the weed seemed to gather under me, forcing me upward. In but a few minutes the slowly receding spires of Atlantis told me that I was on my way to the surface.

I LAY on the bosom of the sea, kicking and screaming, but that diabolical stuff was determined that I should not sink again. Finally, as all strength seemed to be leaving me, I felt myself hauled slowly out of the water. They on board the *Nautilus*, seeing me struggling there in the water, had slipped a boathook under the ring at my belt and were pulling me to her decks.

But I was crafty. Once on board I revealed nothing of what had happened, merely pretending that I had been taken with cramps on coming to the surface. Then, very carefully, I laid my plans to kill Dr. Tyrrel as soon as he should return. Secretly I got out my pistol and a knife, and watched for the ascending bubbles that would tell of his coming.

But he never came. I waited there until dusk—waited until the captain came to me in alarm and begged me to go below in search of his missing employer. I should have been glad to go—for another purpose than he thought—but I knew that devilish seaweed would stop me at the outset. Looking over the side I could see it lurking there, waiting. Once I was

in its clutches it could hold me there powerless while my quarry came aboard in safety and my last chance was lost. But I could not tell them this, so I cut a rent in my diving dress, telling them it would be impossible for me to venture below.

With the coming of darkness, all thought of my leaving the ship was abandoned, and Dr. Tyrrel's life was despaired of. For myself, I knew that he was still down there keeping his tryst with Wynona, and the thought of it made me fairly boil with rage. As the night wore on, I became exhausted with the play of conflicting emotions, and, pretending an illness, I went to my cabin.

I MUST have slept longer than I had intended, for I had many long dreams in which I saw my colleague in the arms of Wynona. The two of them stood there on one of the pillars of Atlantis, mocking me as I struggled with the weeds of the Sargasso. Each dream brought the stuff nearer my throat, while it shook and crushed me as if I were a rodent in the grip of a python. It had clutched my shoulders and was shaking me again, when I awoke and saw that I was not at the bottom of the sea but safe in my cabin, with the captain of the *Nautilus* grasping me frantically by the shoulder.

"What is the matter?" I demanded, bounding out of my bed and wondering if Dr. Tyrrel had slipped back during the watches of the night.

"The ship is sinking, sir," he said, his voice all a-tremble in the darkness. "You'd best come on deck. There's something wrong. I don't understand it."

The man's teeth were actually chattering, and the tones of his voice struck me into a panic. As I stood there, peering at his white face in the gloom, I noticed for the first time that the floor of my cabin had as-

The Farmerette

One of the most unique and interesting girl pictures we have been able to offer picture lovers for some time. To any one interested in girl pictures you will find much charm and loveliness in this picture. It is finished in oil colors and adds any amount of beauty to any one's surroundings. It is made in the following sizes and will be sent to any address upon receipt of the sum given below in any form except stamps.

Size	Plain copies	Mounted copies	Framed pictures
6x10	$1.25	$1.75	$3.50
9x14	2.00	2.30	5.00
10x17	2.50	3.00	6.00

Or send 10c for sample picture, size 3½x5 inches, not colored.

FORD'S FOTO STUDIOS
Dept. W-6 Ellensburg, Wash.

Stop Using a Truss

Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being mechanico-chemico applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or spring attached—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.

Reduced Fac-Simile Grand Prix

Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely FREE. Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

Plapao Co., 438 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis Mo.

Name .....
Address .....
Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao

FREE!

WONDER OF THE 20th CENTURY

The rare, valuable secret book that has astounded the world. Startlingly reveals the secrets of hypnotism, telepathy, personal magnetism, mesmerism, clairvoyance, mind reading and other subjects. This book—called the wonder of the 20th Century—worth $3.00, but sent FREE to you if you order my remarkable course in Practical Hypnotism—teaches you how to control others—make everybody obey your every wish and desire—conquer bad habits, enemies, win success in life and LOVE, obtain power, wealth, social position. Explains the greatest force in the history of man. Said to be the most perfect, complete and easily learned method in the world. Pay only $1.98, plus postage on arrival. Act Now and the wonder of the 20th Century will be included FREE.

Occult Science Ass'n, 102 Church St., Dept 1116, N. Y. C.

Authors and Writers

You will find the 1924 edition of Webster's New Modern English Dictionary exceedingly helpful in the preparation of your work. See our SPECIAL OFFER on inside front cover of this issue.

sumed a noticeable angle. The ship appeared to be no longer responding to the roll of the seas, but wobbled and tugged in an uncannily impotent way.

Hastily donning an overgarment, I hurried out on deck. The night was starlit, the ocean smooth, save for the gentle undulating billows from which it is never free. And yet the *Nautilus* was going down by the head! Already the angle of her decks had assumed a higher pitch while I had tarried there in my cabin. At that moment she assumed a slight list to port, the wobble becoming more accentuated with each billow. In the forward part of the vessel there arose a wail of voices, from the throats of terror-stricken, helpless men.

I turned angrily to the captain and demanded why he had not set the crew to the pumps.

"I've tried that, sir," he answered, "and I found there isn't a drop of water in her hold!"

"It's her anchor, then," I said; "it's probably caught on the bottom and the rising tide is pulling her under." (I am not a nautical man, and this seemed an adequate explanation.)

"I had the anchor up an hour ago, sir," he answered. "I tried to pull out of here—actually tried to get her under way; but her propellers won't budge her. My God, sir! it seems that we're being pulled down! We actually can't move!"

At that moment there came a ripping and creaking sound from her hold, followed by another drunken wobble to port. And that, I think, gave me my first inkling of what was really happening to the *Nautilus*. Running up into the forward part of the ship, I peered over the side. What I saw there pulled a strange cry of exultation from my throat.

Under her bowsprit and, I dare say, all along the whole length of her keel, were little, suckerlike tendrils protruding from the water, worming and squirming their way upward over her smooth white sides.

The *Nautilus* was in the grip of the Sargasso seaweed! She was being pulled under—pulled under to Atlantis! Now I understood that gruesome pile of wreckage so far below.

I realize that when the world reads this it will call me mad, and I think for the next few hours perhaps I was. I sprang into the air; I jumped and leaped about the deck. I shouted for very joy. I was going to fool Dr. Tyrrel after all! He had said Atlantis would not take me, but it was taking the *Nautilus*, and if it took the *Nautilus* it must take me!

The crew must have gathered from my yells and exclamations of triumph what had happened, for they left off their wails and went to work with hatchets, knives and axes. The weed, by this time, had crept up almost to the rails, and now, as if realizing it had been discovered, it actually began swarming over the side, on to the decks, and eventually into the masts and rigging. They, poor fellows, chopped and hacked and fought it through most of the night. It was a losing fight. Inch by inch her bow tilted downward. Inch by inch her rounded stern arose toward the heavens. Once they tried to lower her boats, but no sooner had these touched the water than the seaweed fastened its clutches upon them.

When the angle of her decks became impossible for further footing, I climbed to her stern rail, where I perched and howled and shrieked in glee.

Ah, fool, fool that I was! I had forgotten that Atlantis did not want me. Had I been more clever, had I had more of the cunning of the day

before, I should have hidden myself away somewhere in the bowels of her and gone down with her to the very depths.

She went down at dawn with a dull creaking of strained timbers and a hoarse, despairing gurgle and whistle from the air expelled from her holds. And I—fool!—perched there on her stern rail, shrieked and shouted for the very joy of it. One by one I saw their bobbing heads go under; one by one I saw the last bits of wreckage enveloped by that slimy creeping thing and engulfed forever.

At noon, at night, I was still floating on.

Again and again I dived, seeking to entangle myself; again and again I felt myself thrust backward to the surface. The sun, a blistering ball of copper in the sky, sank lower and lower, and with the coming of the night I believe I must have slept there on the bosom of the Sargasso Sea.

There were other days and other nights, when I screamed and writhed in raging impotence, for I had come to realize that the sea was only playing with me, waiting there idly for me to die, when I should be carried far from Atlantis and Wynona by some swift current. But on the dawn of the third day a great ship hovered over me and even against my will I was saved.

I come now to the end of my story. I know that the world will judge me mad in the writing of it, but for the world and its judgment I care nothing, for I know whereof I have spoken. I have yet another and longer story to bring to a close and as I set this down I plan to write my finis to it out there on the decks of the *Brant*. Of this Captain Waters knows nothing, for I have his promise that he will not read this until tomorrow.

Therefore on this third day of

WANT GOVERNMENT JOB?
$1400 to $4500 YEARLY
MEN & WOMEN 18 to 65
Mark with an "X" position or positions you want. Cut this ad out, write your name at bottom and mail IMMEDIATELY.
[ ] Assorting Mail in Post Office.
[ ] Handling Mail in Train (Traveling).
[ ] Delivering Mail in City.
[ ] General Office Work, Filing and Answering Telephone, etc.
[ ] Typewriting.
[ ] Bookkeeper.
[ ] Driving Mail Truck.
[ ] Auditor for Income Tax Work.
[ ] Matron at Indian Agency.
[ ] Filing Letters, Cards, etc.
[ ] Patroling U. S. Border.
[ ] Seamstress, Indian Agency.
[ ] Special Agent, Making Investigations.
[ ] Inspecting Immigrants.
[ ] Inspecting Foreign Goods.
[ ] Guarding U. S. Prisoners.
[ ] Guarding Government Property.
[ ] Postmaster.
[ ] Delivering Mail in Country.
[ ] Forest Ranger, Guarding U. S. Forest.
OZMENT'S SERVICE BUREAU,
St. Louis, Mo. 491 C. J. Ozment, Mgr.
Gentlemen: Send me full particulars of positions I have marked with an "X," salaries, locations, opportunities, etc. Also tell me about your 15 hours' home "coaching" tests for the exams, for these places.
NAME.....
ADDRESS.....
Write plainly and mail immediately.

SEX EXPLAINED!
Sex truth at last. Dr. Cowan's book answers in plain understandable language all you want to know. "The SCIENCE OF A NEW LIFE" TELLS ABOUT: The Sex Appeal—Choosing a Mate—Blissful Marriage—HOW BABIES ARE CONCEIVED AND BORN—What to Avoid—Twilight Sleep—etc., 401 pages (illustrated).
THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR CHILDREN.
Special edition of this $3.00 book sent postpaid for $2.00. (C. O. D. 10c extra.)
OGILVIE PUB. CO.
57 Rose St., Dept. 83, New York City
SEXUAL—LOVE AND LIFE!

RADIO FANS
In order to assure yourself of a thorough knowledge of radio and radio terms, you should possess a copy of the 1924 Radio Edition of Webster's New Modern Dictionary. In it there are over one thousand (1000) radio and wireless terms concisely and authentically defined. See our SPECIAL OFFER on inside front cover of this issue.

March I hereby set my signature to this, my story.

CHARLES WILLIAMS RANDOLPH.

WELL, Randolph's story as he told it to me when we first pulled him aboard the *Brant* was about the same as his statement, except maybe it wasn't so connected. But, as I said before, we'd no sooner got him aboard than the capful of wind we'd been relying on dropped off and left us in a dead calm, and then things commenced to happen.

It was about midnight that night, I guess, when we first noticed the old hooker had stopped rolling and was beginning to wobble in a queer sort of way. I didn't pay much attention to it, but turned in, leaving the deck to the mate. He woke me up about an hour later. She was down by the head and already in a bad way. I remembered Randolph's yarn about the seaweed then, and so I ran for'ard to the chains and looked over the side.

Well, sir, I could see it there on her cutwater and all around her forefoot. Then there came a creaking and a groaning from her holds, which meant that her bottom must be covered. I had the whole crew piped and we went to it with axes and knives and everything we could lay our hands on. As heaven is my judge, you could see it a-growing over her sides—it was alive! In no time at all it was on her decks and into her rigging. While we were fighting it out of the main shrouds it would get into the jigger, and when we'd get at the jigger it would get up into the mizzen, and so on. Finally we began to list pretty badly to port, and so I ordered the mate to cut away the fore and jigger, they being the ones that seemed the worst. This helped a little but not much.

And that man, Randolph! He was a fiend! He came out on deck and danced there like a maniac, yelling and singing. He didn't try to interfere with the crew, so we didn't pay any attention to him. After a while I saw him going below, and I didn't find him until afterward.

We were pretty well loaded up with Chilean nitrates—valuable stuff—and so I held on to her cargo as long as I could, hoping we might get her clear; but after a while I saw it was no go. With the cargo out of her, I knew she'd be harder to pull under; but on the other hand, when she was empty it would be easier for that stuff to pull her over on her beam ends. But it was nip and tuck for our lives then, and to hell with the cargo. So I gave the order for half the crew to open her hatches and get the stuff out.

It was in powdered form and packed in sacks, three hundred pounds to the sack. We began getting it up as best we could, and no easy job it was, with the list on her and the wobble and all that slimy stuff a-squirming over her both alow and aloft.

WE'D dropped about twenty or maybe thirty bags over the side when one of them broke and spilled into the water. That was what saved us—that bag breaking over the side. I was standing by the rail helping the men, when I saw it spill into the water; and then I noticed there was a hissing and a boiling all about her where the stuff had gone in. And that weed—it just melted away all around her waterline for the distance of ten feet—curled up and dropped off! That gave me my idea. There was some chemical reaction in that nitrate which was death to that seaweed.

I grabbed the next bag and knifed it open, and we dumped it in. Then I was sure—the nitrates would do the trick.

Well, sir, we just quit fighting that stuff with knives and axes and went

at it with those nitrates. We sprinkled it all over the ship fore and aft, and then we put the whaleboat over the side and sprinkled the stuff against her sides and as far down as we could get below her waterline. Pretty soon the weed in the rigging began to dry up and wither away, and then she began to roll a bit instead of wobbling. Another six hours of it, with most of the cargo overboard, and we were clear. We still had some canvas on her and a little breeze came along and pushed her out of there.

I thought maybe Randolph had thrown himself overboard and had not been noticed during the excitement, but the next day we found him hiding in the after hold. He said he was waiting for the ship to go down and that nobody would fool him this time. When I told him she was clear he began to cry like a child. Then I got him up to my cabin and set him about writing his statement.

But I'd forgotten he had a mania for making away with himself—I suppose I'm to blame for that. He went out on the deck afterward. I didn't see what happened, but the mate said he climbed up into the mizzen shrouds and then threw himself down—not into the water but upon the deck. When we picked him up he was conscious, but dying.

I felt sorry for him, poor devil! He called to me as he lay there dying, and made me promise that I'd bury him as soon as he'd gone.

"I can walk back by myself," said he. "I know the way. I'll find her."

Well, what could I do? I promised. He went, about half an hour later, smiling a good-bye. We sewed him in one of those sacks, put some scrap iron at his feet, and let him go. I suppose he's down there now, and I hope he found her, whoever she may be.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Earn Up to $250 Per Month

Prepare in three months' spare time study at home for this fascinating profession. Travel; meet big railway officials. Splendid opportunities.

Start at $110 Per Month. Expenses paid. Position *guaranteed* upon graduation or money refunded. You can easily qualify. Send TODAY for free Booklet No. D-157.

Standard Business Training Institute Buffalo, N. Y.

Standard Business Training Inst. Buffalo, N. Y.

Send me, entirely free, Booklet No. D-157, giving full particulars about course in Railway Traffic Inspection.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....

MAKE MONEY AT HOME

You can earn good money at home in your spare time making show cards for us. No canvassing or soliciting. We show you how by our new simple method. We supply both men and women with work at home, no matter where you live and pay you cash for all work completed each week. Full particulars and booklets free. Write today.

AMERICAN SHOW CARD SYSTEM Limited

265 Adams Building Toronto, Canada

CHILDLESS MARRIAGE EXPLAINED

Every married woman should write for Book written by Dr. Burroughs, a graduate Physician. Dr. Burroughs has spent forty years treating women for diseases peculiar to their sex and in his book tells why so many married women have been denied the blessing of children—why they are broken down physically in early life.

This book is written in plain language and tells how pain and suffering, so common with women, may be overcome, and the blessing of becoming a mother be granted by using Dr. Burroughs' Prescription.

Dr. Burroughs wants every married woman to have a copy of his book, so if you will send ten cents to pay postage, and your name and address, it will be mailed to you in plain wrapper, at once.

Every woman owes it to herself and family to have good health, and this book may be the guide to show you how.

Write today for your copy and learn how other married women have been granted life's Greatest Blessing—Motherhood—by using Dr. Burroughs' Prescription.

R. C. BOYER, 1001 Kemper Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

POSTALS 20 samples, 25c; 10 hold to mirror, 25c; 10 transparents, 25c; 5 bathers, 25c; all, 75c. Photos. Set of 20, $1.00; 4 samples, 25c.

CENTRAL NOVELTY CO.

112 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill.

The Soul-Catching Cord

(*Continued from page* 36)

The bony hands raised to the skull, took it off and made a desperate attempt to hurl it at him. The skull clung to the blackened fingers as if magnetized.

Before the scholar had completed the diagram, the skeleton fell to the ground. It moved feebly, until darkness screened it from him.

Then out of the night came a final mournful and piteous cry, "Oh, spare me, and give back the cord of my soul!"

As if in answer came the clear early-morning call of a vendor of greens, the first always of the day, "*Mai shia tsai! Mai shia tsai!*" The world, the world of restless, moving, everyday life, of reality, was upon him.

Overcome by a drowziness that was almost a swoon, Moh-chien sank back with a groan and lost consciousness. His hand relaxed on the cold, braided cord in his pocket.

It was broad daylight when the scholar awoke. As he opened his eyes he saw a knot of people surrounding a young woman—the wife. They had picked her up from the floor, where he had last seen her, and even now were loosening a heavy, braided horsehair cord from around her neck. She was pale, and her head lolled back. On her throat were great livid bruises.

A young man, frightened and breathless, was chafing her hands. No one paid the least attention to Moh-chien.

The girl-wife showed no signs of life; and they carried her to the family hall, where stood the shrine. Her husband kowtowed before the god, and burned silver and gold-foil spirit money. He lighted two candles.

At that moment Moh-chien spoke, wearily.

"All that is unnecessary. She is not dead. Here—I have the cord that holds her soul."

He felt in his pocket for the cold bit of braided rope. But the cord was gone.

Yet, in proof of his first statement, the wife stirred. She sighed and muttered, "Lead on Vaung Tsan, *Tha-tha*. And I will—will—"

"Will—*not*—follow!"

The scholar completed her sentence with forcible distinctness.

"What?" ejaculated an elderly man, a neighbor. "This is more than strange! The old wife, Vaung Tsan, used to live here! Why, she died just before you were married! She hanged herself, three years ago! Yes!"

The man became visibly more excited.

"Yes, it was just three years ago last night! I remember, because it was the third day of the mid-autumn festival. In that room, Mei-An, *Tha-tha*—in your bedroom."

The young husband knelt by his wife with tender remorsefulness. But gone from her were the shadowy vapors of *Ch'i*. She smiled weakly back. Then they both turned toward the old scholar, as if subconsciously aware that there, at their side, stood their deliverer.

Before either of them could speak, he, too, smiled. His faded, far-seeing eyes were gentle. He picked up his traveler's staff and left the house.

It was still some ten *li* to his home, a village not far from the city of Soochow.

Deaf, Dumb and Blind

(*Continued from page* 30)

it does not come from outside. Vagrant visions of the past, somber scenes of other days, flash before me in stereoscopic review. A flaming factory . . . hysterical screams of terrified women penned in by walls of fire; a blazing schoolhouse . . . pitiful cries of helpless children trapped by collapsing stairs; a theater fire . . . frantic babel of panic-stricken people fighting to freedom over blistering floors; and, over all, impenetrable clouds of black, noxious, malicious smoke polluting the peaceful sky. The air of the room is saturated with thick, heavy, stifling waves . . . at any moment I expect to feel hot tongues of flame lick eagerly at my useless legs . . . my eyes smart . . . my ears throb . . . I cough and choke to rid my lungs of the Ocypetian fumes . . . smoke such as is associated only with appalling catastrophes . . . acrid, stinking, mephitic smoke permeated with the revolting odor of burning flesh. * * *

Once more I am alone with this portentous calm. The welcome breeze that fans my cheeks is fast restoring my vanished courage. Clearly, the house cannot be on fire, for every vestige of the torturous smoke is gone. I cannot detect a single trace of it, though I have been sniffing like a bloodhound. I am beginning to wonder if I am going mad; if the years of solitude have unhinged my mind—but the phenomenon has been too definite to permit me to class it as mere hallucination. Sane or insane, I cannot conceive these things as aught but actualities—and the moment I catalogue them as such I can come to only one logical conclusion. The inference in itself is enough to upset one's mental stability. To con-

Announcement

in the
May Number
of

WEIRD TALES

The Unique Magazine

UNDER THE N-RAY

A Complete Novelette

***By* WILL SMITH *and* R. J. ROBBINS**

An unbelievably fascinating story, with a touch of horror—a combination of science and weird occultism—a tale that will hold you spellbound, that rises gradually to a tremendous climax—such a tale is "Under the N-Ray." Not the least of its many vivid pictures is the destruction of Atlantis by meteors, earthquake and flood.

In the May Issue

On Sale April 1

Clip and Mail this Coupon Today!

WEIRD TALES
317 Baldwin Bldg.,
Indianapolis, Ind.

Enclosed find $2.50 for 1 year's subscription to "Weird Tales" to begin with the April issue.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

(Price in Canada $3.00)

cede this is to grant the truth of the superstitious rumors which Dobbs compiled from the villagers and transcribed for my sensitive finger-tips to read—unsubstantial hearsay that my materialistic mind instinctively condemns as asininity!

I wish the throbbing in my ears would stop! It is as if mad spectral players were beating a duet upon the aching drums. I suppose it is merely a reaction to the suffocating sensations I have just experienced. A few more deep drafts of this refreshing air. . . .

Something—someone is in this room! I am as sure I am no longer alone as if I could see the presence I sense so infallibly. It is an impression quite similar to one which I have had while elbowing my way through a crowded street—the definite notion that eyes were singling me out from the rest of the throng with a gaze intense enough to arrest my subconscious attention—the same sensation, only magnified a thousandfold. Who—what—can it be? After all, my fears may be groundless, perhaps it means only that Dobbs has returned. No . . . it is not Dobbs. As I anticipated, the tattoo upon my ears has ceased and a low whisper has caught my attention . . . the overwhelming significance of the thing has just registered itself upon my bewildered brain . . . *I can hear!*

It is not a single whispering voice, but many! * * * Lecherous buzzing of bestial blowflies . . . Satanic humming of libidinous bees . . . sibilant hissing of obscene reptiles . . . a whispering chorus no human throat could sing! It is gaining in volume . . . the room rings with demoniacal chanting; tuneless, toneless and grotesquely grim . . . a diabolical choir rehearsing unholy litanies . . . pæans of Mephistophelian misery set to music of wailing souls . . . a hideous crescendo of pagan pandemonium * * *

The voices that surround me are drawing closer to my chair. The chanting has come to an abrupt end and the whispering has resolved itself into intelligible sounds. I strain my ears to distinguish the words. Closer . . . and still closer. They are clear, now—too clear! Better had my ears been blocked forever than forced to listen to their hellish mouthings * * *

Impious revelations of soul-sickening Saturnalia * * * ghoulish conceptions of devastating debaucheries * * * profane bribes of Cabirian orgies * * * malevolent threats of unimagined punishments * * *

It is cold. Unseasonably cold! As if inspired by the cacodemoniacal presences that harass me, the breeze that was so friendly a few minutes ago growls angrily about my ears—an icy gale that rushes in from the swamp and chills me to the bone.

If Dobbs has deserted me I do not blame him. I hold no brief for cowardice or craven fear, but there are some things * * * I only hope his fate has been nothing worse than to have departed in time!

My last doubt is swept away. I am doubly glad, now, that I have held to my resolve to write down my impressions . . . not that I expect anyone to understand . . . or believe . . . it has been a relief from the maddening strain of idly waiting for each new manifestation of psychic abnormality. As I see it, there are but three courses that may be taken: to flee from this accursed place and spend the torturous years that lie ahead in trying to forget—but flee I *cannot;* to yield to an abominable alliance with forces so malign that Tartarus to them would seem but an alcove of Paradise—but yield I *will not;* to die—far rather would I have my body torn limb from limb than to contaminate my soul in barbarous

barter with such emissaries of Belial * * *

I have had to pause for a moment to blow upon my fingers. The room is cold with the fetid frigor of the tomb . . . a peaceful numbness is creeping over me . . . I must fight off this lassitude; it is undermining my determination to die rather than give in to the insidious importunings . . . I vow, anew, to resist until the end . . . the end that I know cannot be far away * * *

The wind is colder than ever, if such a thing be possible . . . a wind freighted with the stench of dead-alive things * * * O merciful God Who took my sight! * * * a wind so cold it burns where it should freeze . . . it has become a blistering sirocco * * *

Unseen fingers grip me . . . ghost fingers that lack the physical strength to force me from my machine . . . icy fingers that force me into a vile vortex of vice . . . devil-fingers that draw me down into a cesspool of eternal iniquity . . . death fingers that shut off my breath and make my sightless eyes feel they must burst with the pain * * * frozen points press against my temples * * * hard, bony knobs, akin to horns * * * boreal breath of some long-dead thing kisses my fevered lips and sears my hot throat with frozen flame * * *

It is dark * * * not the darkness that is part of years of blindness * * * the impenetrable darkness of sin-steeped night * * * the pitch-black darkness of Purgatory * * *

I see * * * *spes mea Christus!* * * * it is the end * * *

* * * * * * * * * *

Not for mortal mind is any resisting of force beyond human imagination. Not for immortal spirit is any conquering of that which hath probed the depths and made of immortality a transient moment. The end? Nay! It is but the blissful beginning . . .

Your Last Chance to Get a Copy of Our Mammoth Anniversary Number

3 IN 1

OUR May, June and July numbers of 1924 were combined into one **big** issue. The stories in this over-size edition are full of breath-taking adventures, and eery crime—woven in a masterly fashion by the authors. They are extraordinary, unusual, imaginative tales of stark terror and shuddering horror.

YOUR life is not complete until you have read this issue. We are selling a good number of these every day and the supply will soon be exhausted. Send your order in today before it is too late. Price 50c.

WEIRD TALES

Dept. T-1 317 Baldwin Bldg. Indianapolis, Ind.

PEPPY GIRL PHOTOS

The prettiest you ever saw. Young and stunning Beauties in Startling Poses. Postcard size, 4 for 25c. 12 for $1.00. You'll keep these forever. Address Robt. H. Denning, McKenzie, Tenn.

IMPORTED FRENCH LOVERS PHOTOS!
Beautiful girls and fellows in Romantic Kissing and Hugging poses. Highgrade color tinted postcards. 12 for $1.00. Carr's Novelty House. (WT) Box 178, New Haven, Conn.

Bloody Moon

(*Continued from page* 16)

ibility and endurance; his overseas service had taught him some tricks of this fighting game. He beat out with his fists; he took the clenches and played for blood. Always the hands worked for his throat.

And what curious hands they were —long and murderous, with nails like razors! Once they caught in his face, and he felt the warm blood drip upon his defending arms. For a moment he fancied he had gained the ascendancy when, by a terrific blow with no better aim than blind instinct, he smashed the unseen face. The thing staggered back. But he had hardly regained his own scattered faculties before the battle was resumed, with bloody determination. He sidestepped whenever possible, retreating as opportunity offered. He had to feel his way carefully, however, for the jump-off is always a menace in cave exploration, and he was satisfied that there was a subterranean cliff leaping down to the waters of Lost River.

As he retreated, he became aware that the roar of the stream was increasing in intensity. He sloshed into some water once, by which token he knew the passage was going farther down into the earth. A sudden fear, such as takes possession of one in the darkness when he imagines that he is in the act of stepping off, compelled him to hands and knees.

He put his foot back. Less than a yard back his toe went suddenly over an edge! His instinct and knowledge of caverns had not played him false. Had he stayed on his feet and continued his retreat, he would have crashed to his doom far down into the hole through which the waters of Lost River now roared.

Had the woman paused, expecting him to go over the ledge? He remembered now. Several yards back he had sensed a branching of the passages. Cool air came from one direction; warm air from another. The cool air, it was evident, blew from the water whose roar filled his ears. The warm air doubtless came from an inlet somewhere at the surface.

The thought that had he gone the other way he might beat up to freedom sickened him. There was nothing to do now but renew the attack and gain the other passage, the mouth of which she was probably guarding. Every instant when he was fighting the creature he expected to feel a sharp thrust, and a death reaction to some poison such as had probably taken off his father and grandfather.

But he could not wait long here in inaction. Already his muscles were stiffening, and the bruises and abrasions about his body growing painful.

He swore under his breath. Old Alligator Pearson had been slain, back there in those distant days, and he had deserved his punishment. Why couldn't the curse have stopped with the real offender? That was the trouble with one of those crimes—they somehow were never expiated until about the tenth generation.

There remained nothing but to return to the battle. He got his blood going by waving his arms and flexing his muscles, and then he started cautiously forward.

He was making his way steadily along when suddenly he all but stumbled over the woman! The sound of his footfalls had been muffled by the roar of Lost River, and she had not heard his approach until he was upon her.

The battle recommenced with a fury that brooked no quarter. The rest that had chilled and stiffened him more than it had refreshed him, appeared to have been as wine to the

savage Amazon. He pushed her away from him, striking blindly again and again, but without avail. Her claws slashed his face and arms; once she caught one of his fingers between her teeth and nearly bit it off. The terrible pain blinded him into semi-consciousness. With this as an advantage she pushed him back toward the chasm. Nearer and nearer he felt himself forced to the brink of the precipice.

In a sudden reaction of angry energy, he determined that his foe should die with him. If she lived in the flesh, she should now die in its mortality. His foot felt the brink of the jump-off.

The time had come. He had been falling back, trying to keep at arms' length from the woman; but now he changed his tactics and made a desperate clinch. He gave a frantic pull, and together they went over the brink!

In the protracted fall through the Stygian blackness he had some curiously clear impressions. The roar of the water seemed to rise to meet them. The draft of the flue was sharp and filled with chill particles of moisture. The woman who fell with him accepted their common fate with a strange, dull passivity. Her body was warm and not without a certain charm of touch which instinct told him was that of youth. It was a curious paradox that, after many minutes of furious battling, in which nothing but death could close the issue, his hand should be upon her breast, and he could feel the flutter of her heart. Then came the impact.

The chill waters of Lost River seemed to gather them up in a roaring, breathless embrace. He had always been a good swimmer—the waters of Green River could bear testimony as to that. Instinctively he held his breath. The swirl carried him and the woman swiftly away

A Baby In Your Home

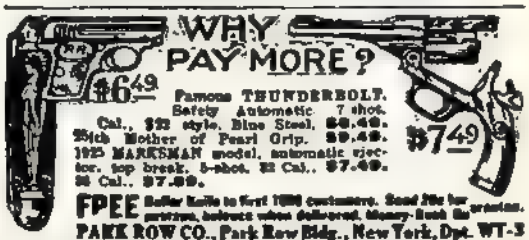
So many married couples yearn for children that thousands of copies of a new book by Dr. H. Will Elders are being distributed without cost to childless women. Any family interested in overcoming conditions of nature that hinder the gift of children should write for this free book today. It describes a simple home treatment based on the use of Sterilitone, a wonderful scientific tonic that has had marvelous success all over the country in relieving constitutional weakness.

Every woman who wants to live a normal, happy home life with little ones around her should consider it her first duty to know what Sterilitone is and why it should be so wonderful an aid to her. Read this little book which is sent without charge or obligation in a plain envelope. It unfolds facts that most women never have had explained to them. Send NO Money, NO Obligations. Simply name and address to Dr. H. Will Elders, 2034 Ballinger Bldg., St. Joseph, Mo.

Know Your Future

Banish Worry! Gain Success!

Send for your FREE Wonderful Three Page Horoscope by world renowned Astrologer. Learn of Your Character, Future Success, Your Friends, Enemies, Love, Marriage. Just send Your Handwriting. *Full Birth Date with 10c for postage.* Print your name and address to avoid delay in mailing. An invaluable surprise awaits you. Write AT ONCE and Good Fortune will be yours. GARGILIS STUDIO, Box 2771-WT Boston, Mass.



LONELY HEARTS I have a sweetheart for you. Exchange letters with new friends in our club. Efficient, confidential and dignified service. Members everywhere. EVA MOORE, Box 968, Jacksonville, Fla.

from the churning froth where the hurtling waters reached the earth again. It came to him that he was not gone, after all. He had not considered the "saucer" which is always to be found at the foot of a fall, hollowed out by ages of falling water to a depth of many feet.

His courage revived by the turn of fortune, he began to figure his way out. From his knowledge of the locality, he judged that he was less than a hundred yards from safety, where the subterranean stream came finally to the light in the waters of Green River. If he could last for five minutes, life would be his. The woman seemed lifeless in his arms, now; but she did not hinder his movements—the sweeping waters carried them both like corks. He found, too, that in spite of the low roof of the stream's bed, his head more often than not emerged in a pocket of air that permitted him a long breath.

The passageway widened, narrowed again: then the waters, half joyfully, half vengefully, suddenly evicted him out of the bowels of the earth into the rocky bed of Green River. The woman was still with him, her hair floating on the cottony waters, the brilliant light of the high-riding moon tracing her features into a picture far from unlovely.

He dragged both her and himself to the sandy bank. Her features were Indian, but with a pleasant variant due to her unmistakable white blood. Her berry-brown skin and gipsy hair came from her aboriginal ancestry; the rotundity of chin and mold of cheek from her Nordic stock. Her clothing was a nondescript garment of skins and rags. And even the bruises about her body, and the clotted blood in cuts about her neck, arms and shoulders, did not mar the beauty of her maidenhood. Her body rested limply on the sand, the last of the curse of the Indian bloody moon.

He dropped to his knees by her and began chafing her hands. Between times he built a fire by flaking two flint rocks together, Indian fashion, and catching the sparks in rotten wood. Thereafter he worked with her to better purpose, and presently she was sufficiently revived for him to remove her to the house, where he turned her over to the tender ministrations of his mother.

The rest of the story came by degrees over a long period of time, while the girl learned the language of her white ancestry. Much of what she recounted was merely her own tradition, but it pieced in well with the facts in young Pearson's possession, and was entirely plausible. The son of the Indian princess and old Alligator Pearson had taken to the caves after he became grown, wiling an Indian girl from a remnant of an allied tribe. In course of time he had killed his father. Passing the curse of his mother on to sons and daughters of his own, in course of time he had died. The charge had been carried faithfully out by each succeeding generation, usually with a poison made from the venom of a moccasin snake and certain plants whose identity had become lost to the girl. And so, because of the pressure of getting food, and the life under the earth, her people had all passed away, leaving her to complete the curse. She had lost the formula for the poison. In desperation she had worked out the present plan, hoping to get the last of the Pearsons into the cave and starve him to death, or drown him over the falls of Lost River.

The rest of this tale is another story. But so far as the house of Pearson was concerned, the bloody moon superstition became merely an old wives' tale. The next Pearson in line was a fawn-skinned boy who would never know a sense of dread when the month of May brought a blood-red moon in the evening sky.

When the Green Star Waned

(*Continued from page* 12)

escape, or work us harm in some manner!"

We left the captive Thing in the little room, fastened the sole door, and Hul Jok retained the ward-strip which alone could unlock it again. The Aerthon said something to Mor Ag, who smiled and patted him on the shoulder, reassuringly.

"He thanked us for putting it beyond his power to obey—"

He broke off to ask the Aerthon another question, then gasped.

"Dear Mother of Life!" he ejaculated. *"The Things are from the dark side of the Moun, Aerth's satellite!"*

The Aerthon nodded.

"Avitchi!" he exclaimed, and added another word: *"Hell!"*

We knew not his language—that is, none save Mor Ag, but we all caught his meaning. He referred to the abode of evil, as it was understood on Aerth.

We would have questioned the Aerthon farther through the medium of Mor Ag, for we all were intensely curious, but just then that occurred which put an end to questioning, and served likewise to hasten our departure from this sorely afflicted planet.

A crackling, sizzling hiss of lightning and a terrific crash of thunder—the world, so far as we were immediately concerned, all one blinding glare of violet-tinted light—and the great Aethir-Torp rocked under the impact.

"Aho!" shouted Hul Jok. "What now?" And he dashed to one of the lookout openings just as another levin-bolt struck.

We joined him, and one glance was enough. All about us and above us were swarming great iridescent globes, and it was from these that

"LOST VIGOR RESTORED IN 24 HOURS"

"Glands Renewed In One Day" Is the Amazing Statement of a 76-Year-Old Veteran

Lost vigor, deadened glands and nerves, and that weak, worn-out, depressed and half-alive feeling need not be dreaded any longer since the discovery of Mando Formula. Now it is possible for those who feel "prematurely old" to become "rejuvenated" and regain the "vital force of youth," often in a day's time, with Mando Formula, is the amazing statement of one who has taken the treatment. This famous discovery is bringing "renewed youth" and "strength" to thousands where everything else had failed.

"I want to say that my 'lost vigor' was restored and 'glands renewed' in twenty-four hours," says D. B. Peake of Kansas City, Mo. "Today I am 76, but I don't feel a day over 40. Before I started taking the treatment I felt I was an old, 'worn-out' man; but now I am enjoying a remarkable 'gland restoration' and am convinced my 'rejuvenation' is complete and permanent. May God's blessing rest on the discoverer of such a boon to humanity."

This wonderful formula, prepared by one of the largest laboratories in the world and generally known as Mando, is easily used at home and seems to work like magic in its rapidity on people of all ages and sexes.

No matter how bad your condition, no matter what your age or occupation, no matter what you have tried if you are lacking in "vigor" and the "vital force of youth" we are so confident Mando Formula will restore you that we offer to send a large $3.50 bottle for only $1.95 on 14 days' trial. If the results are not satisfactory and you are not more than pleased in every way, it costs you nothing.

Send no money—just your name and address to F. L. Carlin, 831 Baltimore Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and the treatment will be mailed at once. Simply pay postman plus postage on arrival. Use it according to simple directions. If at the end of 14 days you are not showing "wonderful improvement" and "rejuvenation," just send it back and your money will be refunded without question. This offer is fully guaranteed, so write today and give this "remarkable formula" a trial.

ART STUDIES

Original and genuine photographs of real beauties

12 Photographs 3½x5½ $1.00
40 Photographs 3½x5½ 2.50
12 Photographs 8x10 5.00
100 Miniature Samples 1.00

Howard Sales Company
Dept. 10, 1188-A Folsom St.
San Francisco, Cal.

TOBACCO Or Snuff Habit Cured Or No Pay

Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Full treatment sent on trial. Harmless. Costs $1 if it cures, nothing if it fails. Used by over 800,000 Men and Women. Superba Co. Dept. 31 Baltimore, Md.

there now came incessant streaks and flashes of lightning—powerful electric currents.

Our commander leapt into the conning tower, the others of us sprang each to his station at one of the Ak-Blastors, of which our craft mounted six, and we promptly left the ground.

In a manner of speaking, we had little to fear, for the metal Berulion, of which Aethir-Torps are built, could in no wise be harmed by lightning, nor could we who were inside be shocked thereby. But some part of the controlling mechanism might have been seriously disarranged by the jarring concussions, and, besides, it was no part of our natures to submit tamely to attacks from any source.

With a *swoosh* we shot into air and Hul Jok headed the sharp-pointed nose of our great fighting cylinder straight into the thick of the shining globes that swooped and floated and swirled about and above us. Their thin walls gave them no protection against our impact, and we shattered them as easily as breaking the shells of eggs.

With the Ak-Blastors we could and did shatter some of the globes which we failed to ram, but the vibrations of disintegration from these had no more effect upon the occupants of the globes than had the little hand Blastors previously—and Hul Jok fairly stamped in rage.

"Ron Ti," he exclaimed wrathfully, "your science is but a fraudulent thing! We mount your improved model Blastors, purported to slay aught living, disintegrate anyone, and now—"

His anger well-nigh choked him.

"Content you," soothed Ron. "If we come again to Aerth—"

"If we come again to Aerth," Hul Jok asserted grimly, "Aerth will be *cleaned*, or I return no more to Venhez! But," he went on, imperatively, "you must find that which will destroy these Lunarions. We shattered and rammed their foolish globes, from which they play with the powers of thunder and lightning, but them we might not harm. They did but float, insolent, safely down to Aerth!"

"We have one Lunarion upon whom to experiment," suggested Vir Dax meaningly.

"Ay," snapped Hul Jok. "And I look to you and Ron Ti to produce results! See to it that you fail not!"

I have known the giant commander since we were children together, but never had I seen him in such mood. He seemed beside himself with what, in a lesser man, I should have classed as humiliation, but I realized, as did the others that it was merely that in him the dignity of the Looped Cross had been proffered insult, amounting well-nigh to defeat, and that to him the Looped Cross, emblem of our planet, was a sacred symbol, his sole object of adoration; and his high, fierce spirit was sore, smarting grievously, and could in no wise be appeased until, as he himself had phrased it, "Aerth was clean!"

We had formally made report to the Supreme Council and had handed over to them, for disposal, both the Aerthon and the Lunarion we had brought back with us. And the Supreme Council, in their wisdom, had commanded Mor Ag and Vir Dax to examine and question the Lunarion, with me to make records of aught he might say—but he would say naught, seemingly taking fiendish delight in baffling us.

The Aerthon, whose name was Jon, had told Mor Ag, while we were on our homeward flight, all that was to be known as to the conditions on Aerth. Here is no space to record it all, but briefly it was as follows:

Centuries ago, the Aerthons, divided into nations, warred. A mighty empire, hoping to dominate the planet, attacked a little country as a commencement. Another and

larger nation hastened to the rescue of its tiny neighbor. A great island kingdom was drawn into the fray. A powerful republic overseas took hand in the matter; so, ended the strife.

But rather than ending warfare, it did but give fresh incentive to inventions of deadly devices. Somebody found that the element—metal—gold, had strange qualities, previously unguessed. Another discovered that gold could be produced by artificial means, synthetically, to use Aerthly terminology. But the producing was by drawing it from out the storehouse of the universe, the primordial Aethir, wherein, dormant, are all things objective and subjective. And the drain on the Aethir opened strange doors in space, which heretofore, by fiat of the Great Wisdom, had been fast sealed.

Scientists of a great race, Mongulions, made too free use of the Aethir, hoping in their turn to subjugate the races of the West. Because of the vibrations set up in their labors, they made easy passage from Aerth to Moun. And on the dark side of the Moun dwelt a race of fiends, soulless, beyond the pale of the Infinite Mercy, who moved about to keep the Moun's bulk always between them and the hated light of the Sun. These had ever hated Aerth and its dwellers, for once they had inhabited that fair planet, until they became too wicked, and they, and the Moun, broken from its parent Aerth by Almighty wrath, had been set apart in the sea of space. The Moun, although circling ever about its parent planet, revolved never on an axis, so had one side turned ever toward Aerth; and these Lords of the Dark Face, in their eon-old hate, saw chance, at long last, to regain their lost world, upon which they looked with envy when the lunar phases brought them during the dark of the Moun to the side facing Aerth. In their Selenion globes they invaded Aerth, availing themselves

LOST VIGOR RESTORED WITH

Million Dollar Gland Discovery

RESTORES LOST VIGOR—MAKES GLANDS ACTIVE—AMAZING GLAND ACTIVITY REPORTED IN 24 HOURS

Youthful vigor, joyous animation, vital and vigorous health and pep. The powers of youth and bubbling energy quickly restored to lost or waning gland vigor.

Many tell of complete rejuvenation. One prominent man writes: "Your gland compound is worth a million dollars to me. I can hardly realize such magic restoration of gland vigor. I feel again the thrill of youth."

VIGOR
VITALITY
HEALTH
PEP

RESULTS—OR NO COST

If age, sickness, overwork or dissipation has robbed you of your vital force, if weak and run-down, your system will quickly respond to this wonderful gland compound, now prepared in convenient form. This new gland discovery, known as VIGO, works on the vital glands, awakens, revives, rejuvenates and gives fading vitality new life, new vigor, full of zestful gland energy. The joy of living can again be yours. To introduce this veritable fountain of youth the double strength $5.00 treatment will be sent for a short time for only $1.95, under full money-back guarantee. There is nothing else like this great discovery. You risk nothing to try it. Just send your name and address to the Mutual Laboratories, 638 Mutual Bldg., Kansas City, Mo. You need send no money, just your name and address. Write today and again enjoy the thrill of youth.

FREE LET US HELP YOU **Quit TOBACCO**

We give free information how to conquer the tobacco habit easily. Permanent results guaranteed.

ANTI-TOBACCO LEAGUE
BOX J, OMAHA, NEBR.

of the openings the Mongulions had unwittingly established.

Aided by these unholy powers of evil, the Mongulions had dominated, even as they had planned, all other races, reduced them to conditions of abject servitude, and were, in turn, subjugated by the Lords of the Dark Face, through sheer will-energy alone.

So, reduced to conditions wherein they were less than beasts, the Aerthons had remained, prey to their fiendish conquerors, subjected to such treatments as even now, while I write, sicken my soul within me to think of, and are unfit to describe—for why afflict clean minds with unnecessary corruptions?

Only those who have heard that Aerthon's story can conceive of what had, for ages, taken place in the ghastly orgies of the Lunarions—and we who did hear will never again be quite the same as we were before our ears were thus polluted.

So utterly abhorrent were conditions on Aerth that our Supreme Council decreed that such must be abolished at any cost. Not the planet, but the state of affairs prevailing. For they feared that the very Aethir would become putrescent, and moral degeneracy reach eventually to every planet of the Universal Chain!

But that, again, involved every planet in the matter. So they, the council, sent out invitation to all other planets for conference. Then came delegates from them all. They talked, discussed, debated, consulted—and that was all.

Hul Jok, the practical, violated interplanetary etiquette, finally.

"Talk!" he shouted, rising from where he sat with the other Venhezians. "What does talk do? We be no nearer than when we started. Since none can offer helpful suggestion, hear me! I am War Prince of Venhez, not a sage, but I say that Ron Ti, if allowed sufficient time, can find that which will slay these Lunarions—all of their evil brood, and *that* is what is needed! Leave this matter to us of Venhez!"

A gravely genial delegate from Jopitar rose in his place.

"Oh, you of Venhez," he said in his stately, courtly speech, "your War Prince has spoken well! Since Ron Ti is acknowledged greatest of inventors on any world, he has but to demand, and if we of Jopitar can place aught at his disposal to further his investigations, he has but to communicate with us, and what we have is at his disposal!"

One by one, delegates from all the planets confirmed the Jopitarian's proffer, repeating it for those whom they represented. And one delegate, a huge, red-hued, blue-eyed being, went even farther, for, springing to his feet, he thundered:

"But if there is to be actual affray, we of Mharz demand that we participate!"

Hul Jok strode forward and slapped the Mharzion on the shoulder.

"Aho!" he laughed. "One after my own heart! Brother, it is in my mind that crafts and fighters from all the planets will be needed before this matter is ended!"

It seems cruel, I know, but what else was there to do? From then on, that captive Lunarion was subjected to strange, some of them frightful, tests. Poisons and acids Vir Dax found had no effect upon him. Cutting instruments hurt, but failed to injure permanently. Already we knew that the Blastors—deadliest weapons known to any planet—were ineffective.

Ron Ti was at his wits' end! Two of our Venhezian years passed, and all to no progress. Then a girl solved for him the one problem he was beginning to despair of ever solving for himself.

He had a love—who of all Venhez has not?—and she, entering fully into

his ideals and ambitions with that sweetly sympathetic understanding none but a maid of Venhez can bestow, had free access at all times to his workshop, wherein he toiled and studied for planetary benefit.

And she, one day seeing his distress at bafflement in his researches, saying naught, withdrew, returning shortly bearing in her arms her chiefest treasure, an instrument of many strings from which she proceeded to draw sweet strains of music, hoping thus to soothe his perturbed mind.

There came a wondrously sweet strain recurring in her melody, and the first time it sounded, the Lunarion winced. Repetition of that strain made him *howl!* And realization came to Ron Ti in one blinding flash of lightlike clarity.

"Harmony!" he shouted, rejoicing. "The blob-thing is discordant in its essential nature!"

Never a maid of all Venhez was so proud just then as that love-girl of Ron Ti's. She had, at least, produced some sort of impression on the fiend, made it suffer grievously. So over and over she played that selfsame strain, and, ere many minutes had passed, the Lunarion fell prone, writhing in anguish, howling like a thing demented.

"Enough, Alu Rai," Ron bade her after watching the captive's misery for a space. "You have rendered the universe a service! Now depart, for I would think. Herein lies the secret of the weapon which will purge an afflicted world of its wo!"

It was a mighty fleet which started for Aerth on that never-to-be-forgotten expedition of rescue and reprisal. Practically speaking, all the craft were of similar appearance, for the Aethir-Torps had long been conceded to be the most efficient type for inter-spatial voyaging. Even the Aerthons had used them before they were subjugated, and Jon the Aer-

Getting Up Nights Makes You Old Before Your Time

Dangerous Prostate Trouble Saps Vigor and Vitality—Often Mistaken for Kidney Ailment

New Treatment Stops Symptoms Often in 24 Hours

$1.00 PACKAGE FREE

According to statistics 65% of all men sooner or later are started on the road to premature age by prostate and bladder trouble.

One of the commonest symptoms of this dangerous, but little understood, ailment is the necessity of getting up nights. Other indications are, burning sensation of organs, dull ache at the base of the spine and in the small of the back, pains in the groin and legs. These symptoms are often attributed to kidney ailments, and it is obvious that the wrong kind of treatment or neglect is almost certain to lead to a dangerous and delicate condition, which may eventually necessitate a surgical operation.

But now, thanks to a new scientific specific, the symptoms, pains and troubles of prostate disorders can frequently be checked within a few hours.

This remarkable new treatment, which seemingly banishes prostate and bladder symptoms in the most stubborn and advanced cases is known as Walker's Prostate Specific. It has now been used by over 150,000 men in all parts of America, and remarkable statements as to quick results, elimination of symptoms, increasing of pep, vigor and vitality and health are daily being received.

In fact, I am so confident that Walker's Prostate Specific will succeed where all other treatments have failed, that I will gladly send any reader of this paper a complete $1.00 treatment absolutely free, prepaid and under plain wrapper. If it cures you, you can repay the favor by telling your friends and other sufferers. That is all I ask. You are not under the slightest obligation, and this treatment never costs you anything, now or at any other time.

To take advantage of this special introductory offer and stop the ravages of prostate and bladder trouble, simply send me your name and address—a postal card will do. Write me today—every hour you delay simply means running unnecessary dangers.

I. B. WALKER,
THE WALKER INSTITUTE
2530 Gateway Sta., Kansas City, Mo.

thon stated that the Lunarions themselves had a large fleet of them housed away in readiness against the day when they might desire to win to other worlds. But, he likewise told us, until the Lunarions had exhausted Aerth's resources, they would remain there, and for Aerthly voyaging in air, their Selenion globes were more satisfactory to them, moved by will-force as they were, than the great Aethir-Torps which were managed by purely mechanical methods.

Naturally, the Aethir-Torps from the different planets varied slightly, as, for example, those of Venhez had the conning towers cylindrical in shape, and placed midway from nose to stern; the noses sharply pointed, sterns tapering to half the size of the greatest diameter—that of the waist of the craft; our Ak-Blastors were long, slender, copper-plated. The Aethir-Torps from Mharz were lurid red in color; blunt of nose; rounded as to sterns; with short, thick Ak-Blastors; and their conning towers were well forward of the middle; octagonal in shape. But why amplify? Surely the Aethir-Torps of each planet are familiar to the dwellers of all the other planets.

And, of course, each craft bore the symbol of its home-world. The Mharzions bore the Looped Dart in gold, even as we of Venhez painted upon the nose of ours the Looped Cross—but the symbols of the worlds are too well known to require description.

Ron Ti and Hul Jok had full authority over the entire squadron, although the war-commanders from all the worlds fully understood the carefully laid plans of aggression. And all the Aethir-Torps, in addition to the Ak-Blastors, now mounted before their conning towers a new device consisting of a large tube, much like an enormous *houtar*, terminating at the snout-end in five smaller tubes.

It was black night when Aerth was reached. And it was not until the sickly, wan daylight broke that actual operations commenced.

Spreading out, we quartered the air until the great oval flat showed plain. It was our good luck that it was our own craft which was the first to come above it, and, as we identified it, Hul Jok's eyes glowed in wrathful joy—if such emotion may be thus contradictorily described. He caught Ron Ti's eye and nodded.

Ron Ti, obeying, threw over a lever. A most dreadful and terrific din shook the air with its uproar. From afar to the northward came a similar bellowing howl. Then from the eastward the same sound reached our ears, being replied to, a moment or so later, by the signal from the distant west. And from the southward came the answering racket, and we knew that all Aerth's surface was under surveillance of one or more of the Aethir-Torps comprizing the Expeditionary Fleet.

Slowly, deliberately, we began circling above that infernal ovoid valley. But after that one hideous, bellowing howl, the tubelike arrangements before the conning towers changed their tones, and from them came the same wondrously sweet, heart-thrilling, soul-shaking strain of melody as that which Alu Rai, the love-maid of Ron Ti, had produced to the exquisite torment of our captive Lunarion.

Over and over the strains were played, and still nothing happened. The idea was Ron Ti's, and I began to wonder if in some manner he had miscalculated. Suppose it did not affect all the Lunarions alike? In that case not only would the expedition be doomed to failure, but the name of Ron Ti would become subject for many a jest on many a world! And

we of Venhez must, perforce, walk with bowed heads!

But Ron Ti was smiling, and Hul Jok's fierce face bore an expression of confident, savage expectancy, and I—I waited, curious, hopeful still.

So swiftly that we could barely see it, an iridescent globe spun through the air, rising diagonally from the cliff-base, shooting straight at our Aethir-Torp. A touch of Ron's hand, and the strain of music sounded even louder, clearer, sweeter.

The globe, when within a quarter of a mile, shot straight upward, discharged a terrific, blinding flash of chain-lightning against our craft, followed it by a second and even more intense discharge—and still the sweet strain of harmony was all our reply.

The globe swooped until it nearly touched us—and I slid forward the stud on the Ak-Blastor behind which I stood!

The Lunarion bubble was not more than a hundred feet away at that instant, and, like a bubble, it vanished incontinently. As ever, for all that we could shatter their Selenion Globes, those demoniacal Lunarions themselves we could not disintegrate, or so we deemed then, and I know that I said wrathful profanities in my impotent disappointment.

But Hul Jok grinned, and Ron Ti nodded reassuringly to me, saying consolingly:

"Wait!"

Well, I waited. What else could I do? But by this time the same game was going on all over the Aerth. Wherever the Lunarions had abode, the strains of melody were driving them into a frenzy of madness, and they came swarming forth in their globes, hurling lightning-flashes at our Aethir-Torps, which might not thus be destroyed.

Yet, in a way, honors were even, for if they could not damage our Aethir-Torps, neither could we do

Yes! We Have No More Anniversary Numbers

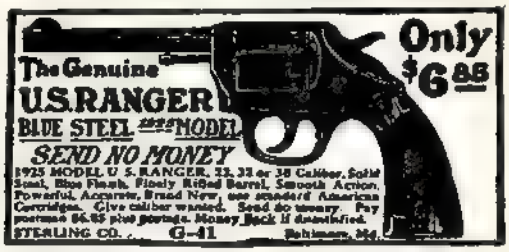
—is what we shall be saying to you pretty soon. This monster edition of WEIRD TALES consists of **three issues combined into one**—namely, the May, June and July numbers of 1924. You can't go wrong by ordering a copy as it contains some of the very best tales that we have published.

IF your appetite craves stories of the supernatural with well-balanced thrills—hair-exercising tales that stir the sterner emotions—you will be well fed by reading this issue. It offers a pleasurable excursion from the land of realism.

WE are filling a great number of orders for this gigantic sized wonder book every day and it won't be long before we shall be out of copies. Mail your order in to us today before it is too late. Price 50c.

WEIRD TALES

Dept. W-1 317 Baldwin Bldg. Indianapolis, Ind.



PHOTOS OF BEAUTIFUL FRENCH GIRLS
Poses by the most beautiful living girl models with wonderful astonishing forms. High grade postcards Imported from France. 10 for $1.00, postpaid, sealed. Order a set today. You'll be very pleased with them. Carr's Novelty House. (WWT) Box 178, New Haven, Conn.

HAVE YOU THE PHYSICAL VIGOR AND VItality you would like to have? If not, write at once for interesting health secret. Your name on a Postal Card brings it. Eugene S. Eaton, 126 Gibson Building, Bandon, Oregon.

aught but blow their globes into nothingness, while they themselves did but flee through the air back to their abodes, unharmed by the vibrations from the Ak-Blastors.

And in this manner, for three days and nights the futile warfare continued, and by morning of the fourth day I doubt if there was left to the Lunarions a single Selenion Globe. At least, for two days and nights more, we none of us saw any. Yet, during those two days and nights, we continually played that music over and over until all Aerth vibrated from the repetitional sound-waves.

But on the next morning following, we had clear proof that the Lunarions had had all that they could endure of suffering. An Aethir-Torp, of a far different model than any we were acquainted with, shot into air with incredible speed, and catching a craft of Satorn unawares, rammed it in mid-air, completely wrecking it—only to be shattered into dust in its turn by the Ak-Blastors of a Markhurian Aethir-Torp. The crew of the ill-fated craft we could not save, but they were amply avenged ere long.

It happened that we witnessed this ramming, and Mor Ag shouted his surprize.

"But that Aethir-Torp, despite its speed, is of an age-old model," he affirmed excitedly, and Hul Jok nodded agreement.

"Our Lady of Love grant that their Ak-Blastors be of equally antiquated model," he chortled. "If they are, their vibrations are of too long and too slow wave-lengths to affect the modern Berulion metal of which we now build our fighting craft!"

And so it later proved to be.

We could very easily have shattered their old-model crafts, taking our own good time therefor, but to what avail? It would leave us the same old problem. The Lunarions, with their levitational powers, would descend safely to the ground, and would still inhabit Aerth, overrunning it like the evil vermin that they were.

But the far-thinking brains of Ron Ti and Hul Jok had laid out a carefully evolved plan, and aside from continuing to drive the Lunarions mad with the hated music and evading further collisions with their Aethir-Torps (no light task, either, considering their speed) we of the expedition refrained from using our Ak-Blastors until the Lunarions must have come to the very conclusion our master-strategists desired them to reach eventually—that in some manner we had exhausted our vibratory charges.

At last, one morning we were made the objects of a concerted attack. From all points came hurtling those old-style Aethir-Torps, and we—we fled from before them! Finding that their old-model Ak-Blastors had little or no effect upon us, protected as we were by the Berulion plates, they fell back on their levin-bolts, and these they hurled incessantly, until they, as well as we, were well out of Aerth's atmosphere, and into the great Ocean of Aethireal Space.

But ever we played that same maddening music, and it acted as powerful incentive to hold them to the pursuit, for they had lost all caution in their rage. And ever, as we fled from before them, we laughed.

And at last, some five million miles from Aerth's surface, we turned upon them!

Stretched out in a long, curved line, we awaited their coming, and as they came within our range, every Aethir-Torp commenced whirling about as if on a transverse axis, presenting one moment the nose, next a side, then the stern, and again the

other side, and once more the stem or prow, in this manner giving play to all six Ak-Blastors—the forward one, the two on each side, and the one pointing to rearward.

And the Lunarions, although heretofore we might not injure them, were soon without protection, their Aethir-Torps shattered, left exposed to the deadly chill of outer space, and their forms, loose though they were in structure, subjected to the awful pressure of the inelastic Aethir!

It compressed their bodies as if they had been density itself. And, having no defense, they instinctively drew close to each other—and Aethiric pressure did all that was necessary.

They were jammed into a single mass, and *then* we played upon that with the Ak-Blastors until that mass, too, became as nothing!

Only from that blank space where the fiends, the Lords of the Dark Face, had been, floated in all directions a shower or swarm of dull red sparks, which, even as we watched, slowly flickered and burned out in the depths of Abysmal Night!

RON TI bowed his head in reverence to that great Power which had permitted us to be the instruments of Its vengeance, signing in the air before him the Looped Cross, symbol of Life.

"As I suspected," he said, gravely, "they were soulless. They had naught but form and vitality, mind and will—life of the lower order, non-enduring. The red sparks proved that—and even those have burned out, resolved back into the Sea of Undifferentiated Energy. Our work is ended. Let Aerth work out its own rehabilitation. That wondrous race of Aerthons will soon rear the foundations of an even greater civilization than their world has ever before known."

Classified Advertisements

Help Wanted

WANT A GOVERNMENT JOB? $95-$192 month. Steady. Men-women, 18 up. Common education sufficient with our coaching. Experience unnecessary. List positions—FREE. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. A-156, Rochester, N. Y.

Trick Cartooning

Beginners Instructions with 23 Comic Trick Drawings. $1.00. Particulars Free. BALDA ART SERVICE, DEPT. 45, Oshkosh, Wis.

Personal

LONELY LITTLE "FLAPPER", TIRED LIVing alone, very wealthy. I dare you write. W. M. U. Club, Box 305, San Francisco, Cal.

"FIND YOUR SWEETHEART—There is someone for you somewhere. Introductions confidential, vast membership. Emma Franz, 949 Montana St., Chicago."

250 NAMES, ADDRESSES, DESCRIPTIONS, also pictures lonesome men, women. Price 25c. Box 3317, Boston, Mass.

MARRY! BIG DIRECTORY WITH DESCRIPtions and photos, mailed in plain wrapper for ten cents. Bonafide Co., Dept. 73, Kansas City, Missouri.

SWEETHEARTS CLUB. STAMPED ENVELope for proposal. The Lilly Club. Station H. Cleveland, Ohio.

GET ACQUAINTED. EXCHANGE LETTERS. Write enclosing stamp. Violet Ray, Dennison, Ohio.

Miscellaneous

A COMFORTABLE LIVING, HOME SEWING for us; any sewing machine; city, country, no canvassing. Send stamped addressed envelope. Home Industries Co., Bloomfield, New Jersey.

FREE BOOKLET, HOW TO BECOME SUCcessful in Real Estate. Macdonald Co-operative Realty, San Diego, California.

REAL PHOTOS—GENUINE UNRETOUCHED Photos of Beautiful Models. The kind that are in demand. Set of 12 for $1.00. Wibow, Box 295, Mingo Junction, Ohio.

ART OBJECTS, SPECIAL BOOKS, PICTURES, etc. Particulars free. Send no money. O. W. Miller, 125 AK Church St., New York.

EARN MONEY AT HOME

YOU can earn $1 to $2 an hour in your spare time writing show cards. No canvassing or soliciting. We instruct you by our new simple Directograph System, supply you with work and pay you cash each week. Write today for full particulars and free booklet.

WEST-ANGUS SHOW CARD SERVICE LIMITED
Authorized Capital $1,250,000.00
184 Colborne Building, Toronto, Can.

$700 a week from his own Photograph Studio

"My income now averages from $700 to $1000 a week," writes Michael Gallo, who owns his own photographic studio on fashionable Fifth Avenue, New York. He adds, "My portrait studies bring me as much as $250 a dozen."
Hundreds of others are earning big money everywhere. Amazing growth of Professional Photography offers chance of a lifetime; high-salaried position or your own business. $50 to $75 a week in spare time!

LEARN AT HOME

No previous experience or special ability is needed. New easy method makes you a Professional Photographer in spare hours at home. Famous experts of New York Institute of Photography train you by mail. All branches: Motion Picture, Portraiture, Commercial, News Photography. Earn while learning.

Motion Picture or 3 x 7 View CAMERA FREE

Your choice absolutely free. Motion Picture Camera takes real Motion Pictures on standard professional film used by all theatres. View Camera is latest professional model for all still photography; genuine anastigmat lens.

WRITE FOR BOOK

Handsome, big new book explains wonderful opportunities: positions paying $50 to $250 a week; how to start your own business; how to earn money in spare time. Send postcard or letter today for FREE BOOK and free Camera offer.

NOTE
If you prefer to come to our New York or Chicago Studios for personal instruction, day or evening classes, write for Catalog R-80 to nearest address: 241 West 36th St., New York, N. Y., or 630 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Dept. 29, 143 West 36th St., NEW YORK, N. Y.

NEWS-REPORTING
SHORT-STORY WRITING
PHOTOPLAY WRITING
STAGE-PLAY WRITING

A LITERARY CAREER

through Expert Assistance by Distinguished Authors, Editors and Newspapermen. Also—

A MANUSCRIPT SALES DEPARTMENT handling the work of new and established writers.

We guarantee disposal of all salable stories

PLOT CHART AND COPYRIGHT BOOK FREE

THE HARVARD COMPANY
473 Montgomery St. San Francisco, Cal.

WEIRD MYSTO OUTFIT

The ORIGINAL weird Mysto Talisman Ring—wards off evil spirits, sickness, spells, etc.. Ancient belief, brings Success to wearer in love, business, games. ALL Undertakings. Green Gold finish, snakes set with Lucky Mysto Ruby and Emerald, fits any finger. ALSO
The startling MYSTO WONDER, amazing & mysterious instrument, answers ALL questions. LOVE? Hate? Enemies? Marriage? Children? Money? Life? Luck?
FREE with Outfit—Direction and question booklet—A DREAM BOOK —ALSO Free plan to make money.
Pay on arrival $1.97 Plus Postage.
MYSTO CO., 102 Church St., Dept. 1118, N. Y. C.

50-50

Fifty Stories for Fifty Cents

THE SUNKEN LAND, by George W. Bayly

An eery tale of a forest of great trees alive with hate and armed with giant tentacles.

THE PURPLE DEATH, by Edith Lyle Ragsdale

In your wildest imaginings you will not guess what killed these men until the author reveals it to you.

IN THE WEIRD LIGHT, by Edward Everett Wright and Ralph Howard Wright

A fascinating novelette about one who wandered through the maelstrom into the secret caverns of earth.

THE SIXTH TREE, by Edith Lichty Stewart

A tale of the weirdest game that ever was played.

IMPRISONED WITH THE PHARAOHS, by Houdini

The master magician tells an eery, true story of his adventures in Egypt.

The above are a few of the smashing stories in this BIG ANNIVERSARY NUMBER of "Weird Tales." Altogether, there are fifty distinct features—Novels, Short Stories and Novelettes. This issue was the 1924 May, June and July numbers combined. We have a limited number of them on hand, and while the supply lasts, will mail one, postage prepaid, to any address for

FIFTY CENTS

— — — — — USE COUPON — — — — —

WEIRD TALES
317 Baldwin Bldg., Dept. A-6,
Indianapolis, Ind.

Enclosed find 50c for copy of Anniversary Number.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

A Generous Package

is only one of the advantages of

The New Pettijohn's

WHOLE WHEAT CEREAL

THE big package of New Pettijohn's is one of the best out and out *values* on your grocer's shelves.

But the thoughtful wife and mother doesn't buy it just for that reason alone. She thinks of what is *in* the package.

Whole wheat — with 25 per cent Natural Wheat Bran. So delicious that the family never seems to tire of it — and everybody gets the bran that is so good for them, *and likes it.*

Mineral Salts and Vitamines — so necessary to health and growth.

Convenience — the New Pettijohn's cooks through and through in 3 to 5 minutes.

The New Pettijohn's is selected whole wheat, pre-cooked, processed to develop the flavor, rolled and delicately toasted.

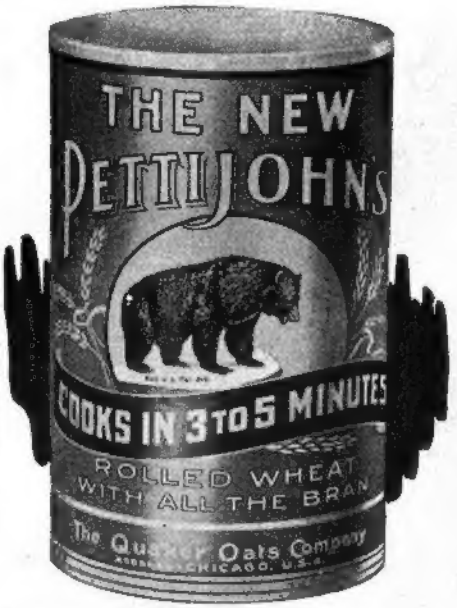
A hot, fresh cereal that makes a generous, grateful breakfast — oftentimes a welcome change for luncheon — and a nourishing supper for growing children.

Eat the New Pettijohn's with good top-milk or cream. The flavor is something to be grateful for.

TRY IT — TASTE IT — TELL YOUR FRIENDS

At your Grocer's — a Generous Package

1. Cooks in 3 to 5 minutes.
2. The pick of America's Wheat—contains 25% Natural Bran, with essential Vitamines and Mineral Salts.
3. A new and delicious Flavor brought out by pre-cooking.



The Quaker Oats Company

CHICAGO, U.S.A.

This superb 110-piece set, with your own initial on every piece, decorated in blue and 18-carat coin gold, with gold covered handles, consists of:

12 Dinner Plates, 9⅛ in.
12 Breakfast Plates, 7¼ in.
12 Soup Coupes, 7¾ in.
12 Cereal Dishes, 6¼ in.
12 Bread and Butter Plates, 6¼ in.
12 Fruit Dishes, 5¼ in.
12 Cups
12 Saucers
1 Platter, 11¾ in.
1 Platter, 13¾ in.
1 Covered Vegetable Dish (2 pieces)
1 Baker, 8⅝ in.
1 Nappie, 8¼ in.
1 Sauce Boat
1 Sauce Boat Stand
1 Bowl
1 Covered Sugar Bowl (2 pieces)
1 Creamer
1 Pickle Dish
1 Butter Dish, 6¼ in.

FREE 26-Piece Initiated Silverware Set

Exclusive WM. A. ROGERS, Limited, design. Set includes 6 knives, 6 forks, 6 teaspoons, 6 tablespoons, 1 sugar shell, 1 butter knife. Each piece has your own initial to match dinnerware.

Your Own Initial on Every Piece

Only $1 Brings 110-Piece 18-Carat Coin Gold Decorated DINNER SET

IMPORTANT! Hartman guarantees every piece in this set is absolutely first quality—no "seconds." The 18-carat coin gold decoration is guaranteed not to wash or wear off. This is a standard or "open" pattern. Replacement pieces may be had of us for 3 years. Excellent packing to prevent breakage.

It's easy to get this superb 110-piece 18-carat coin gold-decorated Dinner Set with your own initial in beautiful colors on every piece. Read offer from Hartman, the Largest Home Furnishing Concern in the World. Then send while bargain price holds good, and receive with it, absolutely FREE, the beautiful 26-piece Silverware Set, made exclusively for Hartman's by WM. A. ROGERS, Limited, initialed to match dinnerware. Just pin a dollar bill to the coupon below, and mail today.

Newest and Finest in DINNERWARE, Blue and 18-Carat Coin Gold Richly Decorated

Both Sets Have Your Own Initial on Every Piece

The quality of this set, its snowy white lustre and decorations compare with the finest imported ware. Your own initial in colors on every piece surrounded by gorgeously colored decorations. All handles covered with 18-carat coin gold, and each piece has 18-carat coin gold border and rich blue follow band.

FREE INITIALED SILVERWARE SET TO MATCH MADE BY WM. A. ROGERS, Limited

Only $1 with coupon brings complete 110-piece set and with it FREE, the 26-piece initialed Silverware Set. If not satisfied after 30 days' trial, return both sets and we refund your $1 and pay transportation charges both ways. Otherwise, take nearly a year to pay balance due on 110-piece set only—a little every month. Silverware is free. State initial wanted.

Order by No. 322GMA18.
Bargain Price of 110-Piece Dinner Set, $39.98.
$1 with Order. $4 Monthly. Silverware Set is FREE.

FREE Bargain Catalog

Hundreds of pages of the world's greatest bargains in **Furniture, rugs, carpets, home furnishings, etc.**—all sold on easy monthly payment terms; **30 days' free trial.**

FreeGifts lookexplains how you get **Glassware, Silverware, Jewelry, Table Linens, etc., FREE.** Write for Catalog No. F7275 "Let Hartman Feather YOUR Nest"

Just Pin a Dollar Bill to Coupon—MAIL TODAY

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
Dept. 7275 **Chicago, Illinois**

Print Initial You Want Here

I enclose $1. Send the **110-Piece 18-Carat Coin Gold Decorated Dinner Set No. 322GMA18, Price $39.98,** and with it the 26-Piece Silverware Set, absolutely FREE. I am to pay nothing further for goods on arrival—only the small freight charges. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If satisfied, I will send you $4 monthly until full price of Dinner Set, $39.98, is paid. Will pay nothing at any time for the 26-Piece Silverware Set. Title remains with you until paid in full. If not satisfied after 30 days' free trial, I will ship all goods back and you will refund my $1 and pay transportation charges both ways.

Name.....
R. F. D., Box No.
or Street and No.....
Town..... State.....

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.

Dept. 7275 Chicago, Ill.

Copyright, 1925, by Hartman's, Chicago

The Largest Home Furnishing Concern in the World